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THE LURE OF THE NEW FOREST

BY

ELIZABETH CROLY

WITH FIFTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS AND A MAP

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THE NEW FOREST SPEAKS

I AM old, though New my name,
I was here when plumes of flame
  Kept the wolves at bay ;
I have seen men come and go,
Armies, races, melt like snow,
  And gods pass away.
Roman Eagles I have known,
Seen the Northman's Raven flown,
  Seen Monks bring a Cross,
Seen the Golden Dragon flare
Over Saxon war-hosts where
  Rose-red grew my moss.
Out of fire and battle-cries
England rose beneath my eyes,
  I saw England born.
I have served her : Forest yew
Sped the arrows when they flew
  Thick on Crispin's morn ;
Spain's Armada fled my sons ;
Forest oak bore English guns
  On Trafalgar Bay.
Still my service is renewed,
England needs my solitude
  More than ships to-day.

ROGER MAST.

To
E. M. M.

BROCKLEY BRANCH

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I desire to thank Miss Diana Weston of Lyndhurst for the very considerable trouble she has been kind enough to take in helping me to find illustrations for this little book. My thanks are also due to Mr J. G. Shortt for permitting me to make my own selection, free of charge, from the spoils of his camera.

E. C.

THE LURE OF THE NEW FOREST

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

Area—Administration—Acts of Parliament

When Agnes Palmer told her brother that he needed a change, she was thinking of Pourville or Le Touquet.

But when she persuaded him to go to a doctor, and when the doctor said that he did need a holiday—a very particular holiday—the lady's plans suddenly went agley.

The patient, she was told, needed complete rest. Not for him the crowded hotel, the stuffy casino of a foreign resort; not for him even the liverish sea-front and energy-sucking links of an English watering-place. He must relax his taut nerves in

some green solitude forgotten by bustling Time.

By a fortunate coincidence the doctor knew exactly where Mr Palmer ought to go; he had a widowed sister who lived in the New Forest, and took paying guests. He would fix matters up with her if Mr Palmer liked.

Mr Palmer was most grateful for the suggestion. Miss Palmer was silent.

Gladly would she have avoided going into exile with him, but it was not possible for one who had played the devoted nurse in Egypt and Italy to decline the rôle because it was set in Hampshire. She breathed not a word of her disgust except to a morocco-bound volume which went with her everywhere. Of course she was not so old-fashioned as to keep a diary; let us say rather that she recorded her reactions in it.

Now, her nature was one of those inquiring, laborious, tidy ones which cannot think of enjoying a week in the bulb fields of Holland until Motley's *History of the*

Dutch Republic, and two or three of its like, have been well digested. So she noted down what she considered was a complete account of the Forest before she went. Then she described what she saw and heard on the spot with a mind unprejudiced by local patriotism. Because of these things, it has been thought that her account of their visit is likely to give intending pilgrims a just idea of what to expect, together with the necessary dates and stories. In this hope we print the following pirated pages from her journal.

LONDON, *June* 10.

We go to the New Forest this day week. And what is the New Forest? To begin with, it is not a wood. Forests always used to be. In my young days witches and robbers, lost children and charcoal-burners, lived in forests so dense with leafage that hardly a ray of sunlight pierced the gloom. But outside Grimm's *Fairy Tales*, and inside a law book, a Royal forest is "a certain territory of woody grounds and fruitful

pastures, privileged for wild beasts and fowls of forest, chase, and warren to rest and abide there in the safe protection of the king, for his delight and pleasure."

The New Forest has an area of 92,395 acres, of which about 62,000 are wood and heath, the rest pasture and private property. I do not understand acres; as for mileage, one author gives it as thirteen miles from north to south, and a little more from east to west, while another calls it twenty by fifteen. As they both wrote in the late nineteenth century, when no change was made in the boundaries, the only possible explanation of the discrepancy is that one of them walked. A third party says that the New Forest contains a hundred and fifty square miles of the most beautiful forest scenery in England.

The New Forest is administered for the Crown by the Department of Woods and Forests. Their representative, reigning at Lyndhurst, is called the Deputy-Surveyor. He replaces the Lord Warden of old days,

who was usually a great person, governing by Steward. At Lyndhurst, too, is held the Court of Swainmote, consisting of six members called Verderers who are elected by the Commoners, and one appointed by the Crown. They decide disputes over Forest matters and punish offences against Forest law.

Just before the War the Crown was losing from two to three thousand pounds a year on the Forest, while the Commoners were making a profit of about fifteen thousand pounds from their privileges of turf-cutting, fuel-gathering, gravel- and marl-digging, and grazing. These rights were originally given as compensation for harm done by the King's deer, and for the various hardships of living under Forest law. Deer and hardships are now no more, but the compensation continues.

Here is an epitome of New Forest history.

1079.—A region, afterwards known as the New Forest, was afforested by William the Conqueror. This simply means that he

imposed the Forest law on a large district, chiefly waste land, and part of it Crown property inherited from Edward the Confessor.

1289.—A perambulation of the New Forest was made, and showed that the boundaries had gradually been pushed outwards until the Forest covered the whole south-western angle of Hampshire from Wiltshire to the sea, from Southampton Water to the Avon, and in some places beyond that river.

1301.—Public clamour forced Edward I to reduce it to the boundaries known prior to Henry II's reign. The latest ordnance map of the district shows them practically unchanged.

1848.—A Commission was appointed to define the Commoners' rights. By now the Forest had become something of a white elephant. Its timber was no longer used for the navy. Kings hunted there no more. When a buck was killed for the Crown, its cost worked out at about £110.

No public interest was taken in the Forest as a beauty spot. Pilfering and poaching were universal. The Commoners were always grumbling.

1851.—An Act was passed ordering the removal of the King's deer (about 2000 head), to leave more fodder for the Commoners' cattle. Still there was dissatisfaction.

1868.—A Royal Commission advised the disafforestation of the whole district as the only way to end the disputes between Crown and Commoner. The Commons Preservation Society successfully fought the project, backed by public opinion. The London and Dorchester railway had been built about seventeen years, and since then Englishmen had discovered this great demesne, royal in name, but theirs to enjoy. They had no intention of letting it be broken up into private property and War Office rifle-ranges.

1877.—The New Forest Act was passed ensuring the preservation of the woods,

forbidding enclosure except to protect young plantations, and reorganising the ancient court of Verderers on a popular basis, so as to protect the Commoners' interests.

FINIS

Last time George overworked I had to read up wicked Italian noblemen ; nowadays even nervous breakdowns are not to be had in pre-war quality.

We go to the New Forest this day week. Heifetz is playing on Sunday : I shall not hear. Harry Tate will be at the Coliseum next week showing the world how to unfold a deck-chair : I shall not laugh. Freda has got her editor friend to ask me to a party at which Arnold Bennett and Walter de la Mare are expected : not one of my illusions will be shattered. I shall be tramp, tramp, tramping over 92,395 acres of waste land with a Big Business Man suffering from nervous strain.

My only hope is that the luck which has

won me so many raffles and returned me so many umbrellas, and given me such good Channel crossings, will send a New Forest viper to bite me on the first day of the Rest Cure.

CHAPTER II

A NEW FOREST HAMLET

A Famous Road—Gypsies and Fairies—Saxon Peasantry—Antiquity of the Forest

WATERLOO, 7.30.
BROCKENHURST, 10.12.

IT was as sudden as that. London came with us all the way: in the roar of wheels, the smells of soot and restaurant car, in the glossy weeklies showing Society snapped in the Park and the Dolly Sisters in a striking pose. Then we stepped out into a new world: silence, cold, rain-scented air, and black tree shapes against a grape-blue sky. We had arrived at the New Forest.

We would have given every nightingale in its woods for the glow of big head-lights and the simmering noise of an engine.

Wishes are not horse-power, however, and we could not ride.

An important contractor, about to sail for New York, had made us miss the good train which does the journey in an hour and three-quarters; but we had wired in plenty of time to Mrs Lister, who promised to meet us. Did she live more than three miles from a post office, and was our message undelivered? We stood like two miserable aliens in the awestruck hush of a country night. I felt that the Forest was unfriendly; that such old wild places were haunted by shadowy beings who hated humankind.

At last a paintless tub-cart drawn by a shaggy pony came rocking into the station yard. Out got a tall young woman in raincoat and felt hat. Were we Mr and Miss Palmer?

"Mrs Lister?" asked George, grimly and incredulously.

"No. Miss," said the lady. "I'm afraid I'm rather late. Lawrence wouldn't come along. I'm so sorry."

"Where is the car?" demanded George.

"Oh, I've brought the pony-trap instead," said Miss Lister; "a car would have cost you eight shillings, and the trap will be nothing—I've borrowed it from a neighbour. The road from Brockenhurst to Lyndhurst is famous; you wouldn't like to hurry over that. Of course it would have been more direct for you to have booked to Lyndhurst Road Station, but we thought you'd rather come into the Forest this way. Nothing makes up for a disappointing first impression, does it? I'm afraid some of the luggage will have to come by outside porter to-morrow if that's all yours."

George would not hear of it. He sent a late last porter to knock up a garage, and we left him standing by a cairn of pigskin and crocodile leather, clad in his country suit, and winked at by ten thousand stars.

This will teach him to have the right kind of breakdown!

There were a few cottages, then an open space (called the Balmer Lawn), and im-

mediately after the Forest crept round us. In the silver light I saw great trees half buried in bracken, and others standing aloof like kings in a circle of greensward. I could see ferns growing on the branches of some giants near the road. Sometimes a broad grassy drive ran between the woods; sometimes a glade opened out like a faery theatre set ready for their masters by Puck and Pease Blossom. In spite of flickering rabbits' scuts and the whimpering of owls, there was an extraordinary air of stillness, of finger on lip, and caught breath about the Forest, as though something mysterious were going to happen at any moment. Even Miss Lister could not dispel it; but, heavens, how she talked!

I soon learnt that she had been an art student in London; since her father's death there had been no money for college fees or hostel. Uncle Ben had promised to send them his patients as paying guests, and we are the first "to be experimented on." *She* thought it was going to be great fun,

but Roger thought it would be frightful. No, Roger is not a brother, but almost one of the family. He lives next door all alone. His father was a yeoman farmer, who left him just enough money to keep body and soul together. His mother was a gypsy, who soon got tired of living in the same place all the year round, and disappeared when Roger was cutting his first tooth. He had had a superior education, and was expected to go to London, and become something which wore a tall shiny hat. But he prefers mooning about the Forest. People explain it by saying that he must have had shell shock in France. The truth is that the Forest is his mother, his politics, his creed. "If you once start him talking of it you won't be able to stop him," said Miss Lister.

"It must feel rather romantic to have Romany blood in your veins," I said.

"Roger doesn't seem to think so," she said. "I can't see anything particularly attractive about the New Forest gypsies

myself. They're only beggars, and sometimes threatening ones. They're dirty, too, except over their food. With the grime of ages on their cheeks they'll keep their pots spotless, and come to cottage doors to beg for well water rather than dip their bucket in a stream. That's an Eastern touch, isn't it? They hardly ever have caravans. They drive into the ground several giant croquet hoops of pliant wood, throw a tattered bit of sail-cloth over, and that's their home."

"What do they live on?" I asked.

"Oh, rabbits! Everyone does. A keeper once told a Deputy-Surveyor quite frankly, 'Rabbits is the bread of life for everythink.' But the gypsies make clothes-pegs and skewers, and sweep chimneys, and pick wild flowers to sell in Bournemouth as well. If you like gypsies you will be happy here, for they abound."

Then she returned to Roger again. "Of course *he's* not grimy, but sometimes his house is. When we're sure he's out watching a vole or something like that, we go to

it and set it to rights. What with books and specimens, and orphaned fledglings, and creatures who've had their paws broken in traps, and stacks of music and dinner-plates, it's like some half-excavated house at Pompeii. Yet he's very good at weeding our garden, and cleaning our pigsty and fowl-house. He may forget to eat his supper, but not to cut wood and pump water for us. We roast his weekly joint and bake two batches of bread for him. But we can't catch up with all his kindnesses to us, especially when he brings his fiddle in to spend the evening."

I told her that I was disappointed about the gypsies, but I hoped there were still charcoal-burners in the Forest, and a witch or two.

Yes, there are charcoal-burners, and they still have "clotten houses" made of turves, and round ovens like the ones used in Rufus' time. One couldn't say charcoal-burning was the chief occupation of the Forester, though. Nothing is. The

Forester prefers odd jobs, which vary with the season, such as rineing, or stripping the bark from fallen timber, fern-cutting, gathering leaves for mould, lopping holly for the Christmas market, and so forth. Some of them are hard-working small-holders, who graze cows and ponies, and have a black pig or two rooting for acorns and beech-mast, but for the most part they take life easily. "The Forest is rather like the Swiss Family Robinson's island," Miss Lister explained; "it's full of potential rabbit stews and squirrel pies. Why toil and moil, then? The Foresters can't stand transplantation. They simply pine away in the hard cold world."

I said I didn't wonder.

"Then as to witches," continued Miss Lister, "there were two at Beaulieu in the eighteenth century—Mary Dore and Kate Knox. They used to turn themselves into black cats, hares, and owls. Kate was gambolling about in the form of a hare one night when she was shot by a silver bullet.

Her ghost haunts Kit Nox Hill. I don't know what happened to Mary, but if she had been hanged or drowned it would surely be remembered. I expect she was too valuable, with her love philtres, and charms for warts, and spells for sick cattle. We have our own especial version of Robin Goodfellow, called Lawrence. At least we had; no one has seen him for a generation and a half."

"Elementary education," I said.

"I expect so," she agreed. "He must have seen one of those raw-beef-coloured barracks that spoil every village, and heard that attendance was compulsory, and fled. He's better off playing noughts and crosses on the sandy floor of a rabbit hole than gabbling dates and doggerel in a county school-house without understanding why. It's sad that, in nearly every village, the prettiest building is the inn and the ugliest the shrine of learning."

It was not what I meant, but there was no chance of explaining.

"Lawrence used to bewitch colts, and cast spells of idleness on men, and lead travellers into bogs," she went on. "The Forest is full of bogs, but if you avoid places where the cotton flower grows you will be all right. There are lots of places in the Forest with fairy names, like Tom Puck's Hill, Puck Pits, Pixey Field, and Pixies' Cave. However, Roger says our fairylore is very poor, that we've got no stories, and only a goblin instead of a train of spirits. He says it's because the people here are pure Saxon peasants. Cerdic and his Saxons are supposed to have landed at Calshot on the edge of the Forest, you know. They colonised it so completely that nearly every place in the Forest has a German name. There's nothing of the old Britons left except their grave-barrows. Roger says that they were probably singers and story-makers like the Irish; so when Prince Ambrosius Aurelianus was slain with all his host at Charford (he was supposed to be King Arthur's father), Cerdic routed the fairies too."

"I am sorry about Charford," I said.

"Sometimes I am too," she replied; "but then I don't think the West Britons would have done what the West Saxons did to glorify Hampshire. I like to think that the first overlord of all England was a King of Wessex. Our Empire began *here*. Saxons and Danes ruled from Winchester; the Conqueror was crowned there as well as at London, and held his court there every Easter. As long as that city was a great centre of politics, religion, and fairs, kings and courtiers came to hunt in the New Forest. But first they moved the capital to London, and then the wool staple to Calais. The Hampshire wool clip used to be nearly as important as the Australian is now, and it *had* to be sold at the staple town of Winchester. Then Edward III moved the staple to Calais, to encourage trade with Flanders. Winchester began to decay from that hour, and the Royal chase waned with it. Did you know there were once sixty-four Royal forests, by the way?

This is the only one left fit for the name. Roger tells me these things."

When Miss Lister had been talking for about three miles we branched off from the main road, and began to crawl up a long hill. George's taxi had flashed by some time ago. We got out, and tramped at the pony's steaming sides. It belongs to Roger, and is called Lawrence.

Half-way up the hill a man stepped out of the shadows. It was Mr Mast, otherwise Roger. We were so late that he had come to meet us.

"Lawrence is always lazy when I drive," said Miss Lister. "He trusts me not to thump him, and I can't destroy his faith in me. But his dawdling has given me time to tell Miss Palmer all about the Forest."

"You couldn't do that in a hundred years," said Mr Mast gravely.

There was a pause, and I thought that a suitable remark would be, "The Forest is eight hundred years old, isn't it?"

Good heavens! I might have asked

a beef-eater if the Crown jewels were genuine.

Mr Mast wondered what I could mean. He adjured me to dig in the Bracklesham clay, to excavate the grave-barrows, to visit the British Museum. Surely there was a Forest here in the Upper Eocene period. Undoubtedly there was a Forest in the day of hairy elephants, crocodiles, and gigantic snakes. Was I not aware that, later on, all lower England was bearded by the great forest of Anderida ? This was a part of it. Christianity came to Western England long after converts were made elsewhere, because this deadly Forest kept off the missionaries. It was as terrible to them as the cinnamon forests of Peru were to Pizarro. Who knows what sacrifices were made to the gods of the oak groves ?

I bowed my head to the bludgeoning in silence, whereupon Mr Mast repented, and said in a milder tone :

" Oh, I see, you are thinking of the afforestation. But the Forest was middle-

aged by then. It had a sort of adult baptism when it was called the New Forest. Before that the Britons had called it Ytene, the furzy place, and the Saxons Jettenwald, the Giant's Wood."

I thanked him, and said I understood now.

We had got to the top of the hill. The road widened, and there was a grass clearing on either side. We passed a cottage; in a candle-lit upper window a girl was plaiting her yellow hair. On the opposite side of the road there was a squat church; then a string of cottages joined like a police cordon to keep back the crowd of trees; next an inn mute and decorous; and last of all, a very large cottage in a long orchard garden. This was our destination.

George, standing on the hearth in his baggy suit, filled the parlour. It is pretty, with foxglove-patterned chintzes, some good aqua-tints, and a collection of little china houses on the mantelpiece. Mrs Lister, less pretty, has yet a pleasing manner. She is a small, grey-haired, spectacled woman. But her daughter!

I couldn't take my eyes off her in the lamplight. She is tall, with a small head and masses of dark hair; her teeth, eyes, and complexion are all dazzling. A very young and gallant-looking creature, a Rosalind worthy of something better than 92,395 acres of waste land, deserving a forest such as Grimm wrote of.

They are full of hospitable anxiety. But I do not think George will enjoy playing at Corydon for long. My bedroom has a sloping ceiling and is limewashed. I undressed by the light of one candle stuck in a blue enamelled tin candlestick. The washstand jug was filled with dusky rain-water, navigated by primitive forms of life. If there is a bath it must be a perfect aquarium. The cooking is hardly a fit subject for conjecture if one wants a peaceful night.

These coarse sheets smell of verbena. The boughs are *shushing* outside like a lullaby. I shall be asleep in a minute. It seems quite an adventure to blow out a flame instead of turning off a switch.

CHAPTER III

THE RUFUS STONE

The Norman Kings and the Forest

THE first day of the Rest Cure has been exemplary.

All the morning the patient rested under an apple tree with a closed book on his lap. This hamlet is peopled almost entirely by very clean, fat children, by birds, and by straying families of black pigs. The chief product is honeysuckle. Nothing ever happens here, except now and then a butterfly. No more rumbling wheels, querulous syrens, moaning horns, jingling barrel organs, and shrill newsboys; nothing here noisier than a bee.

In the afternoon we went for a long walk to see the Rufus Stone. Miss Lister had to go to a cottage nearby about some honey,

and Roger (a short, sunburnt, uneasy young man) wanted to see how a nest in the vicinity was getting on, so we all went together.

Our way mostly lay over a moor which stretched for miles—brown and spacious and sweet smelling. Distant woods were smudges of blue. Far away the Wiltshire downs heaved up green shoulders. Over all was a turquoise-coloured sky on which several white clouds had gone to sleep.

The Rufus Stone is close to the main road, down in a trampled dell among a few big trees. It is encased in cast iron. The inscription tells how the murdered tyrant was brought home by "one Purkis." "One Purkis" is professional at the Lyndhurst Golf Course to-day. But we were so besieged by gypsy children who wanted to sell us postcards that we had no time to philosophise about the extinction of the king's line and the survival of the charcoal-burners.

Whatever historians may say, the New

Forest belongs to William the Conqueror. If he was not its father he was its godfather. His ghost confronts you at every turn.

There can be no doubt that when the *Mora*, with her bronze figurehead of an archer, glided out of the mists near Pevensey, and the Conqueror sprang ashore, England was a fen of stagnant waters. He drained the Saxon marsh and made it fruitful. Our sluggish, ignorant, divided island might have become part of the Scandinavian Empire but for him. Nor can there be any doubt that William would not have been the Conqueror if he had not been base-born. When Duke Robert, on the eve of a crusade, made his barons swear allegiance to his eight-year-old bastard, they were indignant at having a tanner's grandchild forced upon them as the heir of Normandy. The Duke died. Some felt no compunction in breaking their oath. Others kept it grudgingly. Plots surrounded the boy; three of his guardians were murdered in succession, and he

narrowly escaped sharing their fate. He grew up among rebels who hated and loyalists who despised him. This childhood hammered him into the "stark man" who struck awe into all; who mistrusted humanity; who had neither counsellor, favourite, nor paramour, and only two friends, his wife and a great scholar; who feared no man, and disobeyed the Pope's command to yield England to St Peter and call himself the vassal of the Viceroy of God. Before he was in his teens he saw that he must be a conqueror or perish. He had to fight harder to gain the inheritance of his father's dukedom than he had to fight later on to gain the inheritance of his cousin's island.

Therefore our history would have been less splendid and our cities less beautiful but for the accident of Herleva's beauty, and the chance which gave Duke Robert his first sight of the tanner's daughter washing linen on stones in the stream, as French peasants do to this day. Internal peace

and order, ecclesiastical reform, the revival of learning, the swift growth of commerce, the foundations of her legal system, the building of glorious cathedrals, the making of Domesday Book—England owes them all to the shape of Herleva's nose.

To that precious cartilage we owe also the preservation though not the creation of the New Forest. Old historians used to dilate on the Conqueror's barbarity in razing thirty or more villages to the ground to make a deer park. That would have been entirely foreign to the Conqueror's policy in England. There was only one political execution in his reign, he put down the Bristol slave trade, and wished to abolish the death sentence. Truly, he could be cruel if cruelty was justified in his mind as the only method to attain a lawful end. When Northumbria had repeatedly rebelled, and the contagion of its example threatened the peace of the realm, he laid it waste with just the quiet deliberation a Government might employ to stamp out

foot-and-mouth disease. Men and beasts were systematically slaughtered, food stores, houses, and farm implements were burnt. A thousand square miles lay desert for years. But this was a very different thing from the ruin of a district to make a private hunting-ground. What really happened was that thirteen years after Hastings he imposed the Forest Law on the woods and moors of Ytene.

The Romans had never built villas or farms in this unfruitful region; a camp, a trace of Roman road, and some potteries are the only signs left of their long occupation. In the nineteenth century an agricultural pamphlet declared that most New Forest land was not worth 1s. 6d. an acre. The names of some of the fields, such as Starvesall, Hungry Hill, and Rough Pastures, describe the nature of this soil which is too poor and waterlogged for sheep. The Conqueror therefore dedicated to the chase a district which could never have grown corn. He did not destroy the rare oases of

farmland among the wood and heath, for comparison of a survey made in Edward the Confessor's reign with Domesday Book shows that land was rented by the same families under both kings. Fisheries, mills, and cornlands continued to pay taxes, often of the same value, though sometimes they had decreased a little. The churches of Boldre and Hordle were built immediately after the afforestation—not for a congregation of deer.

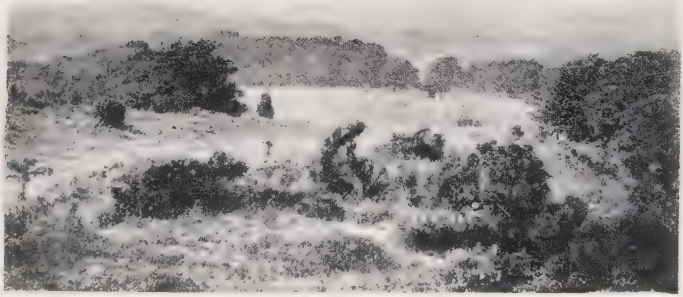
It seems certain that not a brick was pulled down, not an acorn planted, at the afforestation. But the great hardships of living under the evil Norman Forest Law probably drove many poor people from the thirty villages which were scattered over the wild district. Work must have been harder to get. Fields and gardens could not be cultivated when men were forbidden to make hedges high enough to keep out the deer. It was dangerous to be hungry in a place teeming with game, when the penalty for killing a buck was greater than

the penalty for murder. In Wessex minds the New Forest was a symbol of Norman tyranny. Harold, who had no more right to the throne than William, had been Earl of Wessex, and fought under the Golden Dragon banner of Wessex at Hastings.

Hunting was the Conqueror's only relaxation from war and statesmanship. It seems to have been to him what golf was to our statesmen at the Peace Conference. In the New Forest glades he would forget that Scandinavia threatened invasion, that Northumbria and Normandy were in revolt, that Wales and Scotland were gathering for war. These thoughts he left with his crown at Winchester. He was happier in his hunting-box at Lyndhurst than in the proudest of his castles. The Forest was a thousand times his elder, and had no mortal creator, yet it is linked for ever with his name, because he is its chief lover. It is his living monument, the ample shrine of his tremendous memory.

The Conqueror's ghost needed such solace

RUFUS STONE [*F. A. Sweetman & Son*



THE NEW FOREST PONY'S PASTURE [*F. G. Short*

for the slights put upon its clay. Not for him the sad pious funerals of his peasant grandsires in Falaise. Kinsmen and courtiers were dividing his possessions when his body, long left naked and alone, was at last shrouded by strangers, put on a bier, and hurried to Caen. A carelessly made stone coffin was waiting in the church. It was too small, and the corpse had to be violently used before it could be forced in. The funeral service began, only to be interrupted by a man who shouted, "He shall not lie in the earth he has stolen!" William had built this noble church on ground taken from the man's father. The priests cast down their eyes, the little band of mourners whispered together. After some argument and haggling, the man was persuaded to accept money to pay for ground enough to take the coffin.

Herleva's grandson, William Rufus, was now England's master. He thought of England as a cider-maker thinks of an orchard. His grinding taxation was the

byword and envy of every foreign king. He also improved the shining hour by taking bribes from the greatest and the pettiest felons, so that justice ceased to exist. Another of his little economies was to appropriate the revenues of sees and abbeys, bringing works of charity and education to a standstill. At the time of his death he was, in this sense, Bishop of Salisbury and of Winchester, Archbishop of Canterbury, and abbot of eleven abbeys.

But he was something more than a miser, who is usually a chill-blooded person of only one vice. Rufus had a charming variety. He could contemplate putting out the eyes of a whole community without turning a hair. He could give orders concerning two of his kinsmen and his godfather that one should die on the gallows, another on the rood, and a third be horribly mutilated. Once he besieged a castle held by the young bride of the Earl of Mowbray. Rufus captured the Earl by a trick, and sent a message to say that unless the

garrison submitted, the prisoner should have his eyes put out. In matters of this sort, though not in matters of reform, Rufus was apt to keep his promises, so the bride yielded the castle. But her husband had little use for his eyes in the dungeon to which he was sentenced for thirty years. A pretty wit, my masters, as Wilfred Shadbolt would have said.

There may be followers of the Bolshevik school who admire Rufus' policy, but everyone must condemn his purple complexion, his pot-belly, and the bursts of rage which reduced him to unintelligible stammering. Even in epileptic Russia they do not get so angry that they cannot shout, "Off with her head!" By the thirteenth year of his reign Rufus was hated by Saxon and Norman, noble and peasant alike. Perhaps Churchmen hated him a little better than the rest. There was a group of notable priestly exiles in Normandy whispering about evil done that good might come of it; about one death which would avert

many ; about fatal accidents. It was easy for an accident to happen in hunting, especially in the New Forest. Two of the King's kinsmen met with strange deaths there : one had somehow knocked his head on a tree trunk, and another got caught up by some boughs which strangled him. The New Forest symbolised Norman tyranny to the people. Rufus, on coming to the throne, had promised them "the freedom of their Forests," and afterwards added to the horrors of the Game Laws. Everything pointed one way.

On St Peter's Day, 1100, the Abbot of Shrewsbury preached a passionate sermon upon the sufferings of the people, ending up with a prophecy that the stroke of justice was about to fall. He actually said, "The bow of God's vengeance is bent against the wicked. The arrow, swift to wound, is already drawn out of the quiver." That night many ecclesiastics in England and Normandy had remarkably prophetic dreams. The Abbot of Cluny saw the King

before the Judgment Bar of Heaven. The Abbot of St Peter's, Gloucester, saw the Virgin pleading for pity on the English, and heard the Saviour promise that deliverance was at hand.

Next day Rufus set off in the heat of an August morning with a hunting-party which included his youngest, landless brother Henry. Henry was a dark, likeable man of thirty-three, who was nicknamed Beauclerc, because of his love for scholarship. But there was something of the Conqueror in his glance, and later he was to be called Lion of Justice. It was very forgiving of him to be a guest of Rufus, since both brothers had joined forces to wrest from him certain estates which he had bought from Robert: there was no question of returning the purchase money. Robert was now on a crusade. Before going he had let his dukedom of Normandy to brother Rufus on a three years' lease. An extra crushing tax on the English had paid for it, and all the Norman revenues were

going into Rufus' pocket. He had a head for business.

That evening the hunters came galloping into Winchester without the King and without a Norman knight called Walter Tiril. They said that a stag had started up in the sunset glare, and an arrow aimed at it had glanced off a tree and killed the King. It was not a Norman habit to cry over spilt milk, or blood either. Your dead father or brother would be buried sooner or later by someone; your own business was to be first at the division of plunder. "I claim the keys of the treasury as true heir," said Henry, breathless from his ride.

There was no cry of mourning or astonishment. There was only a dispute because one Norman upheld the rights of the big game hunter in Palestine. But Henry was the favourite of the Church party, and many others beside; he laid hand on sword hilt, and the keys were handed over.

Meanwhile Walter Tiril was posting to

Normandy, not to save his life, but to bring the good news to interested parties across the Channel. On the boundary of the Forest he stopped at a smithy near the Avon to have his horse shod. The place is still called Tyrrell's Ford, and until late in the nineteenth century the smithy had to pay a yearly fine to the Crown for its ancient help to the King's assassin. Some authorities hold that Tiril did not kill Rufus, because he repeatedly denied it, and there was nothing to fear, but rather a nation's gratitude to expect, from confession to such a deed.

No one came to staunch the wound or lay the corpse on a bier. A charcoal-burner chanced upon it. He started at seeing a body lying in the grass, crept up, and recognised the King. An arrow was planted in the heart, and one dead hand clasped the shaft. Perhaps Purkis' first instinct was to go away and leave such dark matters alone. Then charity, or hope of gain, overcame him. He chirruped to his pony,

unloaded the bags of charcoal, and tugged the gross body into the cart.

Rufus set off for the capital on his last progress with debauch-purpled face and red beard turned up to the sky, and his blood leaving a wavering line along the dusty road. He had left his mark in other men's blood all over England. The way he reddened to Winchester was afterwards called the King's Road.

Purkis took his find to the cathedral. Next day Rufus was buried like a beast, without mourners or ceremony. He had been more thorough than the German general, and left many of his people not even eyes to weep with. Who should mourn for him ?

Perhaps Purkis alone grew to have a kindly feeling for his memory ; the dead King had made him important in the eyes of all his fellows, and had given him a story for his old age. Surely, in the end, he came to say, " Poor gentleman ! There he lay, bleeding like a pig, with his dead hand

plucking at the arrow, and his eyes looking meekly up to heaven, as though he'd seen the angels a-coming for his soul." No doubt a tear would trickle down the old man's cheek at the pathos of his tale.

But the rest of England rejoiced under the sceptre of Henry Beauclerc. He was a political genius who gave England thirty-five years of peace, and prepared the ground for his famous grandson, the Institution Maker. Nowadays Rufus only seems a small fly in the great shining lump of amber which was the Norman dynasty.

When Herleva was first taught to totter across the room grasping her mother's fore-finger, little did the tanner's wife guess how much history depended on the brat; but probably she could not have loved her more.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE WOODS

Natural History—Decaying Woods—Wicked Commoners—Origin of Forest Rights

I HAVE made four discoveries in three days. First, sunlight is happier coming through a brown holland blind patterned with the shadows of creeper leaves, than coming through Heal's most expensive striped silk curtains. Second, the pleasantest way to be wakened is not by a maid with tea and letters, but by the wrangling of birds just overhead, and the scratch of their little claws on the roof. Third, the drowsiness that comes after a day spent in the open air is luxurious, while merely a dismal tiredness comes from screwing up your eyes at Wimbledon, or shopping in sale time, or standing in tight shoes and a crowd at

someone's reception. Fourth, the New Forest is a true Forest, satisfying to the lover of fairy-tale and ballad.

Those who race through this part of Southern England in powerful motor-cars never see the heart of the Forest. They only see miles of heath dabbed with wood, an everlasting yellow road, groups of ponies, and a rare village or two anxious to supply tea or petrol. But let those travellers forget that they are on the way from Winchester to Southampton; let them stop the car and stray down the velvet bridle-path of a wood, and they will come to a new world. Silence is the chief note of it, and next comes a mingled scent of earth, leaves, and innumerable small flowers. The farther a man's feet carry him into the Forest, the further his heart sinks into a green sea of peace. If he lies in one of the glades for an hour watching the birds and squirrels overhead, he will go back to the high road, as Ayesha came from the magic fire, a younger being.

The woods cluster thickest round this middle part of the Forest, this Lyndhurst-Brockenhurst district which is its heart. Here are the famous ones—Mark Ash (home of the finest beeches), Denny, Knightwood, Bushy Bratley, Ridley (whose oaks are about 380 years old), Gretnam, Queen's Bower. Our hosts say that although there are great woods in the northern and southern parts also, yet those districts are chiefly heathland ; fine, hilly, lonely heathland in the north, and rather dreary heathland in the south. Certainly my Lord of Amiens would be happiest in the middle part.

We have wandered in the woods all day, through a green twilight which sometimes brightens into avenues or darkens into glades. We have waded in bracken out of which foxgloves and the green oak trunks themselves have some ado to lift their heads. We have followed many a brown brook, with dragon-flies, or in Forest parlance "adder-stingers," fanning their wings into a blue mist above, and little islands of

[F. G. Short

SWAN GREEN

[F. G. Short

AN OAK IN QUEEN'S BOWER WOOD

white water-flowers floating on the tide. We have seen enclosures half strangled with honeysuckle, and proud beeches keeping every other green thing at a respectful distance, and gigantic rugged oaks with a girth like Falstaff and a beard stubble of grey lichen. The Knightwood oak, biggest in the Forest, has a waist measurement of more than twenty-one feet and a green young head on his hoary shoulders. Mr Mast tells me that a beech will live three hundred years and an oak more. Old oaks are more or less rare, because they were used for the navy. Yews, called the Hampshire Weed, abound, and sometimes attain an age of four figures.

Blackthorn, cherries, and wild crabs we have met with in marshy clearings where water flashed fitfully through the kingcups and cotton grass. There was another plant there, a rosy, sticky thing which catches flies as a sea-anemone catches shrimps, closing its leaf on its victim and battening on the corpse. Roger Mast showed it to

me, saying that it had no right to the beautiful name of sundew. At this Miss Lister made us smile by a passionate outburst: why was it any worse for sundews to catch flies than for swallows and trout to do the very same thing? George said he quite agreed: there ought not to be one law for men and trout and another for women and sundews; probably this plant was a sort of pioneer or militant suffragette, eating flies on principle and hating it all the time. Miss Lister tried to look cross, but smiled in the end.

Sometimes we came out on a sunburnt heath between the woods. Everywhere we saw hosts of birds, butterflies, and New Forest ponies with dark-eyed, chestnut-coated foals at their heels. These hardy little beasts of 12 or 13 hands live like wild things, though they all have owners. When the colts are old enough they are rounded up and sold at the annual fair in Lyndhurst. Many of them are descended from the sire of Eclipse. The New Forest Pony Associa-

tion, which holds a show each spring, is still working to improve the strain. No one knows the origin of the ponies; it has been suggested that they were brought by the Romans or swam ashore from the Armada; but nowadays both these hypotheses are rejected and nothing put in their stead, for naturalists will not allow the ponies to be natives.

It seemed to me a paradise of wild things. But Roger Mast shook a gloomy head. He granted me the butterflies: every British variety, save one, has been found in the New Forest. But what else was left? A few squirrels and fewer badgers; a few deer, foxes, and an otter or two for the huntsmen. As for birds, that was a cruel story. No other part of England was richer in wild birds, he said, and so collectors, British and foreign, have come here to get specimens until nearly all the rare kinds have been stamped out. The great sea-eagles are hardly ever seen, and the honey buzzards have ceased to come from Germany to

build in deserted squirrels' nests. Small wonder, when a Forester could sell a clutch of eggs at £3 in most cases and £40 in at least one instance. It has been said that it would be safer for the golden oriole and the hoopoe to build in a London park than in this "bird sanctuary" haunted by collectors. However, the nearness of the Channel does bring stray rarities to the Forest, and things are certainly better than they were before 1880, when Mr Lascelles became Deputy-Surveyor. He found that the keepers regarded all wild birds as vermin and the rare ones as their perquisites. They were amazed at being ordered to protect the nests of buzzards and fern owls like pheasants'; it seemed a wicked waste to let kingfishers flash over the streams when they would sell for 3s. 6d. a head in Southampton.

But in spite of Roger Mast's complaints (his only solace is that hens' eggs are sometimes faked for collectors), I will not grumble while green woodpeckers, and

every sort of owl, and golden-crested wrens abound. This last, a winged Tom Thumb, is my favourite bird: nightingale and peacock cannot rival him; his minute impertinence is more delightful than their melody and colour. Roger Mast has disentangled one caught in a tough spider's web. If Spenser had seen it he would have hated the "bag of venim" more than ever.

The jay, says Roger, is a most ordinary bird, but a Londoner may wonder at it, despite the Forester's disdain. Of all the birds I have been so newly introduced to, this seems the handsomest dressed, the most self-satisfied and strident. He is very post-war. Barrie once said that the souls of Londoners were sparrows before they were born as babies; but the sparrow supply must have run short of late, for restaurants, theatres, and picture galleries have been so full of human jays.

Roger Mast is a pessimist, not solely about the birds, but about the whole Forest. Only two-thirds of it is actually Crown land,

and the Department of Woods and Forests is only responsible for Crown enclosures. No one is forced to protect the open Forest, so noble woods have been allowed to decay into jungles of thorn and holly, which scramble over the rotten stumps of fallen trees and strangle the chance-sown saplings.

He has not one good word to say of the Commoners. They are not sons of the soil, exercising certain privileges in the Forest as a birthright. In ancient times the Saxon colonists gathered into small groups which cultivated three great fields in common, for the good of the whole community, while every man might pasture his beasts or get fuel from the waste lands. But at length these settlements had to band together for safety into great groups called shires, or shorn-off pieces, under Shire-reeve and Ealdorman, who survive to this day as Sheriff and Lord-Lieutenant of the county. These shires were small kingdoms. The first of them to conquer all the rest was Wessex, whose territory spread over

Hants, Dorset, Devon, Somerset, Wilts, and Gloucester, and whose lord, Egbert, became king of all Angle-land in 829.

Afterwards for the greater strength of the realm, so constantly invaded and so well desired, land was parcelled out among military chiefs. Each governed a small district called a Manor, and was responsible for raising so many fighting-men in case of need. It was now assumed that all land belonged to the King: the Lord of the Manor held it from him, but only to portion it out among those who promised their service in war. They were roughly divided into three classes: freeholders, villeins who held less lands and had fewer rights, and serfs who had no land nor rights at all. This was the feudal system, and it was established before the Conquest.

After a while it became permissible to pay a fine instead of going to war in person, and so began the Rent question. The lord of the manor, much later, was allowed to purchase land from the Crown. At length

only the waste lands belonged to the people. But in the year of Queen Elizabeth's death it was decided that the inhabitants of a district were too vague a body to have any rights of pasture and fuel-getting even on commons, and that rights were only attached to property. So you might come of a family which had been in the New Forest since Edward the Confessor's day, and yet, if you happened to live in a house which had no rights attached to it, you could not cut fern, or pasture cows, or dig marl to manure your garden, or cut turves for peat (turbary), or take dead wood (Estover or fire-bote), or loose even one black pig among the beech trees (pannage or mast-bote). Nowadays, however, you can exercise certain of these rights on paying a fine to the Crown. Forest-keepers are responsible for seeing that people do not take more than the proper amount of firewood or gravel, nor pasture more than the due number of cattle. They are accountants and policemen before all else.

Because rights were attached to the hearth of a house, one may see derelict fireplaces standing in fields, thereby maintaining the owner's right to fire-bote or turbary long after his cottage has fallen in.

The true Commoner is a landowner. The man who rents house and rights from him is only the exercising Commoner. Both kinds want their pound of flesh out of the Forest; but then, as W. H. Hudson says, corroborated by Roger Mast, all Forest-dwellers are parasites on the Forest, determined to make as much as they can, and caring nothing whether they bleed it to death. Their petty rights, so greedily, snarlingly clung to, must give way to the greater rights of the public, says Hudson, and he pictures the Forest rescued from builders, poachers, and collectors, preserved as a wild-life sanctuary for the student. But it will never be, says Roger Mast; the Commoner would rather see the Forest razed to the ground than give up one least right in it.

Roger Mast is a fanatic, and so a discredited witness. I will not think ill of the Foresters. It has been said that you may gauge a people's character by its architecture. The typical New Forest cottage is a modest dwelling, up to its eyes in flowers, with a thatched roof and thatched porch. Roses would not grow so red and profuse for unlovable gardeners. Nor could people be really mercenary who are so civil and friendly, who leave their digging to warn you that the path you are following leads to swamps, and who charge you so little for glasses of such excellent milk.

Nor will I believe that the New Forest is really in its death throes. It withstood neglect and plunder in the Stuart times. It survived Daniel Defoe's scheme to disafforest and turn it into a colony of Palatine refugees. It escaped the Southampton burgesses' plan to break it up into allotments. The ghost of William the Conqueror guards it still.

IN THE WOODS

In spite of all my resolutions I like the Forest, and Mrs Lister's quite excellent cooking (she knows Italian as well as English dishes), and the small, spotless cottage rooms, and her daughter's beauty and childlike friendliness. I do not much like Roger, because I feel, somehow, that he does not like us. He probably thinks my soft-hearted, overworked brother a blood-sucking Capitalist. Yet he haunts us like a paid guide : such is his passion for laying down the law about the Forest, that he cannot leave even the most uncongenial strangers alone.

Except for saying that he hadn't much room for his things and missed Watkins, George seems to be quite happy in the Simple Life.

CHAPTER V

LYNDHURST

Neighbouring Villages—The Capital—The King's House—Kings, mostly bad—The Verderer's Hall—Forest Law—The Golf Course

LYNDHURST is the capital of the New Forest, but for all its self-importance it is not half so charming as its neighbours. Next door there are Emery Down, set among trees, and Alum Green, where Wise and Walter Crane, being weather-bound, composed a mock mediæval ballad which, contrary to their intentions, was seriously received as the real thing.

Over the way there is Minstead, with a cluster of cottages whose thatch lifts over the windows like eyebrows. They keep away from the church as though frightened by the stocks at its gate. It is a queer

church, with secular-looking dormer windows in its tiled roof, and no stained glass except over the altar. Inside it has the air of having been knocked together by an eighteenth-century village carpenter, for it goes up and down stairs in an inconsequent fashion, and the low gallery is a perilous-looking affair. All round the whitewashed walls, above the wooden pews, there are stout hat-pegs. The Squire has a sort of cattle pen in an alcove. There can only be three choir boys, and thin ones at that, for the bench provided is meagre in the extreme. On the other hand, there is a roomy three-decker pulpit. Just below is a font carved with monsters.

By Minstead Post Office the road gives a sudden dip, and then rises into the woods of Castle Malwood Walk. We must forgive Roger much, because he showed us a little known and most lovely view here. A short way into the right-hand woods there are two trees which frame miles of woodland rolling away below. Among them is a long

clear-cut avenue of firs with a broad stripe of greensward. Far away, when visibility is good, one can see the funnels of the biggest liners at Southampton. Sir William Harcourt owned the castle, and was often spoken of, particularly in *Punch*, as the Squire of Malwood.

Then, farther from the capital, there is Burley, running up hill and down dale round cross-roads, where the hilly moorland of the north comes down to the woods of the middle Forest. It has none of Minstead's sweetness; indeed it rather puts on Lyndhurst airs, but some corners are very pretty, and it has more corners than a honeycomb. It can boast of a stirring past, for it was the scene of a great forgotten battle. On Burley Beacon and in the neighbouring fields there are traces of entrenchments and burials, but what sort of men fought here no one knows. Besides this, Burley shines in the lurid light shed by the memory of the mutinous Dukes of Bolton.

From the close of the seventeenth century

[*F. G. Short*

LYNDHURST PONY FAIR

[*E. A. Sweetman & Son*

THREE DECKER PULPIT, MINSTEAD CHURCH

to the beginning of the nineteenth the Dukes of Bolton were master keepers of the Bailiwick of Burley. A master keeper was a kind of *edition de luxe* of an estate agent, printed on vellum and gilt edged; a groom-keeper was a working man in charge of one of the "walks" into which the Forest is divided. The Dukes held from the King all the woods of Holmsey and Burley, and two lodges, one of them a very noble residence indeed; but it was their custom to behave exactly as though this part of the Forest was their hereditary estate. They were kings in their Bailiwick. They flouted the Court of Swainmote. A constant feud raged between their groom-keepers and the King's, and in one affray at least life was lost. No one had the courage to pluck them out of their Bailiwick, where they snapped their claws like lobsters in the crevice of a rock.

At last, in 1800, the Crown thought of offering them a penny to go into the next street. They retired, having sold a right

which they did not possess for a huge sum of money. Their long exciting reign was over, the fine old Lodge gave place to a modern house, the village grew law-abiding, and the Twelve Apostle Oaks which had stood in the park since domesday pined away from grief; they died of broken hearts if anything ever did.

Brockenhurst and little Boldre, too, are said to be pleasanter than Lyndhurst; but perhaps the capital of any place is bound to be ruined sooner than its juniors. Set among woods, with the moor at one end, it has every chance of charming, could it only shatter those villas to bits, and then remould them nearer to the heart's desire. The village street is wide, and does much business in petrol, postcards, chocolates, and antiques. The church gates have notices imploring you to close them against straying cattle. There is a modern church with a fresco by Lord Leighton.

In Lyndhurst churchyard W. R. Wise, the New Forest historian, was buried. He

was a cousin of Froude, and himself a great scholar, naturalist, and archæologist. He was one of the first people to appreciate Herbert Spencer, and was a follower of Mill. These opinions prevented him from becoming a clergyman, and cost him his family's support. He had to leave Oxford and scratch for a living. He wrote a novel, a fairy play, much journalism, with Huxley, Mark Pattison, and George Eliot for fellow-contributors, and a monumental work on the New Forest for which he got £40. Walter Crane was chosen to illustrate it. He was only seventeen when he set off on six weeks' sketching and tramping with the stranger author. As a disciple of Ruskin he was a little shocked by some of his companion's doctrines; as a townsman he was more than a little pained by Wise's dictum, "I should hope twenty miles a day is not too much for any Englishman." Frequently Crane was fain to sink upon the settle of some Forest inn, dropping his sketching gear on the sanded floor, and calling for egg

flip. But boy-artist and man-scholar became great friends: Crane rejoiced as at a personal fortune when a legacy ended Wise's poverty, and grieved heartily when he died before his time.

In the same churchyard there *ought* to lie Jane, the keeper's daughter, her father, and her poaching lover, all side by side, slain by one tragedy; but you cannot believe these poets, though Kingsley was a clergyman.

A little way beyond the church, and flush with the road, there stands a pleasant modest dwelling called the King's House; adjoining it is the Verderer's Hall. There was a manor-house here long before the afforestation. The Conqueror made it his hunting-lodge. In those days the population of Lyndhurst consisted of Herbert the Forester and two borderers.

From those to late Georgian times it was visited by Royal huntsmen. One of the most constant visitors was Edward I, that tall, golden-haired soldier before whom a priest once dropped dead from

sheer terror. Queen Eleanor and her daughters used to spend much time here during the Welsh Wars, having little heart for Court pleasures while he was in danger. The records of the Chapel Offertory show that the Princesses contributed 3s. 4d. for masses for the soul of Lord Philip, King of France, deceased. It does not seem much to pay for a body, let alone a soul; but perhaps money had the same purchasing power then as it had in the sixteenth century, when you could get a barrel and a half of beer for 4d.—so Roger Mast told us one afternoon when there were two miles of heat-hazed moor between us and home.

Evidently Lyndhurst was beginning to become residential in Edward I's day, for William Le Moyne obtained two hydes of land there by the sergeantry of keeping the door of the King's larder. Just after England had been thrilled by the utterance of *Piers Plowman*, by Wyclif's translation of the Bible, and by the Peasants' Revolt, the Verderer's Hall was built.

Henry VIII enlarged the manor-house, but Charles I began and Charles II completed a great rebuilding scheme. "Divers lodgings" were to be added to "the old house at Lyndhurst in the Newe Forest, as also a Kitchyn, Pastrie, Larder . . . and a stable to contain fortie horse." The work was long adoing, and Charles II got "roundly wet" when he hunted there in 1637, for every roof in the King's House leaked. It is good to know that; I hope he got a bad cold from it. The Stuarts behaved very ill to the Forest. Neither Charles paid the keepers their wages, so that the natural protectors of the Forest had to live by poaching and cutting down timber. Charles I pawned the Forest. Charles II made grants of its woods to misnamed Maids of Honour. However, they were good to the King's House; it was Queen Victoria who did the unforgivable thing to it, and someone ought to have told Mr Lytton Strachey of her barbarism.

It is sad to think that Fanny Burney,

who stayed here when George III brought his train to Lyndhurst, dismissed the Tudor and Carolean manor-house as "inconvenient," and had not a word to say of Chaucer's contemporary, the Verderer's Hall. She was far more struck by the King's magnanimity in allowing the Foresters to watch him dining through the window. She thought that the people's "delight and rapture in seeing their monarch at table, with the evident hungry feeling it occasioned, made a contrast of admiration and deprivation truly comic." When one reflects that, in certain parts of late eighteenth-century England, labourers got as little as 4s. 11d. a week, that meat was 3d. to 4d. and bread 1½d. to 2d. per pound, that candles and firing were dear, and that rabbit-stealing led to transportation, one misses the comical side of this scene. Five years later the "hungry feeling" led a large crowd to attack the King's coach as he went to open Parliament.

In mid-Victorian times the King's House,

no longer used as a Royal hunting-lodge, was made the Deputy-Surveyor's residence, with £70 for upkeep. And it was "improved." The lovely old Tudor part was torn down. Jacobean panelling was covered with planking and with the pickled cabbage wallpaper that suited mutton-chop whiskers so well. An ancient carved wood mantelpiece was replaced by a marble one. Stone gave way to brick disguised with plaster. The Verderer's Hall, built in 1388, was destroyed, and on its foundations we have the work of 1851. The dado of Elizabethan panelling within it was saved from demolished rooms belonging to the King's House, and the oak furniture of the court-room probably goes back to the days when men were tried for stealing bucks from Tudor kings. The dock is solid oak, shaped by axe and adze only.

In the Verderer's Hall is held on the second Wednesday of each month the Court of Swainmote. Next to the coroner's it is the oldest Court in England. The word

VERDERER'S HALL, LYNDHURST

KING'S HOUSE, VERDERER'S HALL AND CHURCH, LYNDHURST

means that it is a meeting of freeholders in the Forest. Each of the six Verderers has to own at least 70 acres of Forest land. Formerly the Verderers were allowed to hunt and kill any buck they might see on the way to Swainmote, but now they get nothing for their pains. The duties are those of a justice of the peace; they are chiefly concerned with offences against Forest Law and with Forest management.

In William the Conqueror's day Forest Law condemned deer-stealers to blindness, and in Rufus' day to death. In 1184 the Forest Assize re-enacted the Forest Law, declaring that punishment should be inflicted strictly upon the body of the culprit, and never take the form of fines. The death penalty for poaching was repealed by Henry III, but Forest Law was savage and feudal till James I's time. The wicked Poaching Transportation Act was not old Norman, but comparatively modern English in origin. Even our great-grandfathers were not allowed to protect their fields and

gardens with a hedge high enough to keep out the Royal deer, so that it was useless to cultivate them. Also, Crown keepers might cut boughs for deer fodder from privately owned woods. Yet things were never quite as bad here as in seventeenth-century France, where the Duc de Blois would not allow wolves to be slain, though they took little children out of the streets.

I know at least one lady who will think expeditation for dogs as cruel as the death penalty for poachers. After all, I can hear her say, the man knew what he was about when he shot the deer, and the dog could not help his size. Under the Norman Law no man might keep a large dog in the Forest lest it should chase the King's deer. Small dogs were permitted as watch-dogs. A certain large stirrup was kept in the Verderer's Hall, and if a dog could not pass through that, he was expeditated by having his three front toes cut off with an axe. It soon became customary, however, to give the option of a shilling fine instead. Was

this the origin of dog licences? The stirrup hanging in the Verderer's Hall dates from Tudor times.

We did not stay to watch the Deputy-Surveyor (late governor of an Indian province) at table, although it might have been as pretty a sight as George III afforded. We wended our way back through the village to an admirable hotel at the other end. The food is good, the magnolia trees are excellent, and the golf links are at the door.

The course is made on common ground, and so there are no railings to show which part of the moor is golf course and which not. The club-house is an empty wooden hut; you cannot pay your green fees unless you chance upon someone working on the course; according to temperament you have a guilty or delightful feeling of travelling without a ticket until you do.

It is a testing course. It crosses the road two or three times, and this tests your straightness as well as the dodging powers

of pedestrians and the wind-screens of motor traffic; I should think all the cars round Lyndhurst are fitted with the unbreakable glass which has such distressing advertisements. It tests your memory, because it is hard to recognise the particular tuft of heather which received your tee shot, when there is such a family likeness about heather —New Forest ponies are not reliable as landmarks. It tests your courage too: we shooed off several cows who scratched themselves against the pins, but we felt that shooing would be thrown away on a large black sow and family who were encamped upon one green. We waited for her to let us through; in vain; she had simply no idea of the etiquette of the game, and merely glared at us between her flopping ears. In the end we picked up, and agreed to call the hole a half.

On the whole, the pleasantest part of Lyndhurst, if you keep your eye strictly on the ball as you pass the villas, is the golf course. For it leads you out on to a

common where pretty girls ride fine horses, and greyhounds run at their heels, and old English country life—a thing more ancient than the original Verderer's Hall—is still to be seen beautifully alive like the Knightwood oak.

Talking of pretty girls, I found George cleaning shoes in his bedroom this morning. I stared. George asked abruptly what I wanted. I had forgotten, and asked what he was doing that for. "Haven't you noticed," he said, "that Mrs Lister and Miss Lister do all the work themselves? How can I let them do my boots? I got this outfit in Lyndhurst yesterday. If you like, I'll lend it to you to do yours with."

"It is a very uncomfortable position to be in," I said. "Dr Elton had no business to let us in for this. It's all very clean, and the food's good in a simple way, but you couldn't call it really comfortable —think of the bathroom, in a loft, reached by a ladder!"

"Yes, I'm giving up baths," said George, "unless they let me pump my share. All the water has to be pumped."

"Roger Mast pumps for them," I said.

"Ah!" said George, "do him good. It ought to leave him less breath to preach with. I'll have two baths a day."

"I wish we'd gone to an hotel," I said; "don't you?"

"Oh, poor things! they want the money," said George.

CHAPTER VI

BROCKENHURST

A Lovable Village—Forest Toys—The Forest in the War—A very old Church

BROCKENHURST is three and a half miles from Lyndhurst; we went with Miss Lister instead of Wise, so we did it by 'bus at sixpence a head.

I like you heartily, Brockenhurst. You straggle, and hide in trees, so that your new church and your dull golf links are quite unguessed at, even after several visits. A stream (or is it twins ?) wavers about you till it comes to the Balmer Lawn, and then suddenly taking fright it runs into a wood to hide. Little boys bathe here, young men play cricket on the lawn, and ponies nibble right under the hotel windows. Over the bridge your cottages begin, and your red roses. At your forge there is always a

groom and a shining horse or two. This is a great part of the world for saddle-horses and pony-carts, for straight-backed ladies, and sharp little men with " stables " written all over them. The end of this road splits, and makes an island of a few humble shops, where we bought ginger beer and postcards from a grey-bearded Forester, who has returned to end his days in his native place after thirty years in London. Beyond this is the railway. To the right, after a cottage or two, a row of shops runs along, and then stops dead as though all at once you had grown tired of playing at shops. Here we bought soap from a grocer who claims to be the direct descendant of Rufus' Purkis.

Your old church is to be found by returning, crossing the railway, and turning up a lane to the left. I don't know how your golf course is to be found. George says it is not at all like Lyndhurst ; all is shaven and shorn, there are crowds of horrible people (other players are always horrible), and there are neither ponies, cows, nor pigs.

It sounds dull as ditchwater, and I shall stick to the Lyndhurst course.

Between Purkis' grocery store and the railway there is a timbered and thatched cottage, with many roses, and a little window full of wooden animals. It is an arts and crafts shop conducted by a lady. Miss Lister said as she unlatched the gate :

" I'm going to ask her to sell some things for me for the first time. I'm dreadfully afraid they're no use. I'm horribly nervous. Do wish me luck ! "

She was quite flushed, and I thought the shopkeeper must be a dragon. On the contrary, a thoroughly likeable woman, with plenty of dry English humour behind her civility. She thought she could sell Mrs Lister's knitting and Miss Lister's candle-shades ; anyway she would try.

Her shop is low-ceilinged, and has a wide open hearth. It is cluttered up with hand-made lace, toys, woodcuts, and garments. Best of all were coloured wooden models of New Forest ponies and foals, in every sort

of attitude, which she sells for an artist bearing the historic name of Whittington. He was also responsible for a hunting set, a jungle set, and a doll's house. In fact, it was a shop for a woman to lose her heart in.

We left the shop in high spirits. Miss Lister foresaw a rosy financial future, every day of which should be marked by the purchase of a whole set of candle-shades. She spent the income accruing several times over in various schemes for her mother's comfort. Then she decided Roger must learn lettering and do broadsheets of his poems—the idiots of publishers wouldn't take them, though they were much better than most of the stuff that got printed—and they must sell autographed, at huge prices. Her elation at the prospect of selling a few shillings' worth of goods made me understand that the wolf was not somewhere in the neighbouring wood, but definitely at the door. All my women friends must have candle-shades for Christmas.

Thus happily we returned through the

village, where an old man was scraping a fiddle, and making a wooden puppet dance by a string hanging from his wrist. A group of sleek grooms and farmers watched from a safe distance ; it was a little cottage girl who brought him his only penny till Miss Lister pulled out a shabby purse.

After we had crossed the railway and passed a cottage where the yellow lupins came almost up to the roof, we turned to the left. A broad lane took us up a gentle slope to the church. Over the hedge we saw a girl teaching a young horse to jump. Beyond the field there was a mass of white forms.

" But they are Regulation Crosses ! " I cried.

" Yes, there was a hospital here in the War," said Miss Lister—" first for Indians and then for New Zealanders."

" I couldn't think before," I said, " of a modern war touching the Forest life at all."

" Ah," she said, " but the Forest did its bit. Just as we gave our best sons,

so did the Forest. Colonial woodsmen felled timber till some of us were frightened and said they'd take the Knightwood oak next. The heart of Mark Ash was cut down. Besides, the Seventh Division was at Lyndhurst before it went to France. And haven't you noticed in every Forest church the Roll of Honour? From our little tiny hamlet twenty-two men were lost."

But it was easier, in that leafy lane, to think of 1066 than 1914. The church is set on a knoll, as a landmark, like all the other Forest churches I have seen. Anglo-Saxons came to worship here when a visiting monk held a service, since there was no parish priest for the village called Badger's home [1] in those days. Domesday says that Aluric, the West Saxon, "holds one hide in Broceste, which was held in parcenery by his father and his uncle, and was then assessed at one hide. It is now assessed at half a

[1] Brockenhurst is said by some to mean "Wood of the Brooks," not "Home of the Brock." Its spelling varies: the links belong to Brokenhurst Manor Golf Club.

hide. Here is one Plough land; one plough is employed on the demesne, and six borders and four slaves employ two ploughs and a half. Here is a church and woods which furnish twenty hogs. It was worth, in the time of Edward the Confessor, forty shillings, it was afterwards worth four pounds."

In my imagination men and women strangely clad passed up that lane to church. Here were the Norman workmen who rebuilt it and left the craft mark of the Guild of Masons on the outside chancel wall. Here was the twelfth-century ancestor of Spelman the antiquary, who held "one carucate of land in Brokenhurst, in the County of Southampton, by the Searjantry of finding an Esquire with a hambergell, or a coat of mail, for forty days in England; and of finding litter for the king's bed, and hay for the king's palfrey, when the king should be at Brokenhurst." Here, many centuries after, came feathered hat and Puritan cap, and among them Henry Browne, who cut down a tree to make a Maypole,

and was fined £10 for it. The horse and cart he had borrowed for the good work were seized, and not restored in spite of all entreaty. The thing was done " by Phanatics who have a prejudice to all customs used tyme out of mynd." Henry Browne was evidently born before his time, and after it too.

John Howard lived here for a while, and must have visited the old church, though he did not worship in it, for he was a Nonconformist, and therefore liable to a £500 fine for accepting the office of Sheriff of Bedford. Nevertheless he accepted it, for there at last he saw a chance of helping eighteenth-century prisoners. In the three jails of Bedford he found dirt, indecency, hunger, thirst, and injustice. Jailers received no wages, and made a living by extorting rent from the prisoners. There were different prices for accommodation, and a favourite way of dealing with the obstinate or penniless man was to put him in a small cell with one dying of small-pox:

he then raised money somehow to escape, or died. Often a man acquitted by a jury would lie in prison for years because he was too poor to pay jail-delivery fees. Howard suggested that the jailers should have salaries. Every magistrate was shocked at so revolutionary an idea, and said that it could not be done without a precedent. Howard set off to find the precedent. He did not find it, but his report of what he found in the prisons of Great Britain and Ireland was so terrible that the House of Commons was startled into action. Howard died of fever in 1790, when he was on a journey to Turkey in search of a cure for the plague. Probably his great work would never have been done if he had not been captured by the French in his youth, and treated with extreme cruelty in a prison at Brest. His fellow-prisoners died like flies, and once he saw thirty-five bodies tumbled into one grave. Young Howard's life was altered by that experience, and so was the British prison system.

Well, we have been a long time at the little gate. Just inside is the ruined shell of a tree; it is said to be the oldest oak in the Forest, and mentioned in Domesday Book. Beyond it is a flourishing yew, said by tree experts to be eleven hundred years old. The church sits low on the ground like a bird taking a dust bath, and you go down several steps into it, which is said to be a particularly Saxon touch. The chancel arch is very early Norman, and so is the charming south doorway. The chancel is Early English. The font is Norman, and cut from the Purbeck quarries of neighbouring Dorset. It is exactly like the one in Winchester Cathedral. For long years it was out of favour, like the Tudor work at Lyndhurst, and lay about in the open air and in sheds, lamenting the tapers, the incense, the chanting, and the awestruck group in their best attire who had brought some little serf or yeoman or lordling-of-the-manor to be baptised. Now it is brought back to blessedness, and set on a new base

copied from the one at Winchester. The belfry is a mushroom only about two hundred and fifty years old, while the growth on the north side of the church is even younger. There is a pleasant feeling about this church, as though its priests and congregation had always been good neighbours and gardeners.

For hundreds of years people disputed about the dedication of Brockenhurst Parish Church, and none knew what saint had it under his protection. In recent years, however, there turned up in Winchester the will of John Draper, 1539, containing this clause: "I bequeath to the Church of Saynt Nicholas in Brokenhurst 1 heyffer." That heifer settled the matter.

Out in the churchyard Foresters have been buried for nearly a thousand years. The grass grows tall as a hayfield. There are two well-kept corners, however. One is the burying-place of the lords of the manor, with a hedge and wrought-iron gate—to keep off serf and yeoman? No! but to keep off strangers, for among the stones seen through

that gate is one "to my dear old nurse." Although it has a feudal look, this hedged corner, yet it is only a little private room where friends wait together. There seems no class hatred in this good-humoured part of the world, where all ranks have a common interest in crops, gardens, and hunting. Besides, as you go from one Forest church to another, and see the many memorial tablets to youths (nearly all of one name in each church) who have been killed in some naval engagement or old colonial campaign, you feel that the lords of the manor have done their duty: you can guess, too, how the mother at the manor-house and at the keeper's cottage were drawn together by such losses. Only in the great towns, where rich and poor are damnably divorced, it is possible for men to forget the chief commandment.

Farther down the slope of the hill is another well-trimmed burial-ground. A plump, grizzled man, with gold rings in his ears, was working there among the Regulation Crosses.

One inscription after another told of some New Zealander, in his teens or early twenties, who died of wounds. There were bunches of flowers on many of the graves. One had a little stone at its foot to say that the boy, an only son, had died that the world might be made better. The old man drew near to tell us that the boy's parents had come all the way from New Zealand to see his grave. They had stayed in the village a fortnight. Perhaps no stranger or more significant figures ever passed up the lane to the church of feudal days.

Near the crosses is an ordinary upright tombstone to Sukra, who, says the inscription, was not by doctrine a Christian. The stone was erected by the churchwardens and parishioners.

The old man told us that this Indian was a servant in the hospital, and died early in the War. On grounds of caste his body was denied a place in the Mohammedan cemetery near London. English theology has done some hard things at Smithfield, but

she was charitable at Brockenhurst. The old man said that many other Indians "were burnt in the woods, according to their faith."

Germans were the first men to worship here; and here, mixing his dust with theirs, is a man who came from India to help us fight Germany. This seems to me the most strange and romantic churchyard I have seen.

"Come away from war to see Brusher Mills," said Miss Lister.

His tomb, close to the soldiers', shows the old man in low relief. Behind are Forest trees. In one corner is a charcoal-burner's hut, and a couple of vipers wriggle impotently before him. This old man's trade was snake-catching. There were certain large snakes at the Zoo which depended on Brusher's adders for their meals. Lord Londesborough also used to buy snakes from him, "to feed his foreign birds on," said the old gardener who had followed us. He also said that in his opinion Brusher's death had something to do with the destruction of his hut. He had slept in it for years.

"They" were afraid he might claim the ground it stood on, and "they" pulled it down. He was given something else, but it was not a charcoal-burner's hut, not what he was used to, and so he took no more pleasure in nipping vipers behind the head with thumb and forefinger, nor in any other thing, but betook himself to a home hardly narrower than the lost one.

But he smiles on the tombstone, and indeed the whole churchyard is without sadness, even where the young soldiers lie. Perhaps it is because the place is so very old, that standing here we see almost from an immortal angle the shortness of human pain, the unimportance of death, in the vast stretch of history. We can prove that out of all suffering and defeat there has always come good at last, and we grow patient. Because of British villages fired by Danish and Saxon pirates, because of the great grave of English prisoners at Brest, because of the hundred colonials in Brockenhurst churchyard, the world *is* made better.

CHAPTER VII

A HISTORY OF BEAULIEU ABBEY

Origin of the Cistercians—The Black Book—Rack, Rope, and Fire—Mr Wriothesley buys Beaulieu

I WAS sitting under the apple tree when Roger Mast came up with an armful of books.

"As you're going to Beaulieu to-morrow," he said, "I thought you'd like to read up the suppression of the monasteries. Here's Gasquet, who will make your heart bleed for the poor monks; and Green, who says that the commissioners were obviously prejudiced men determined on condemnation beforehand; while Froude (here *he* is) says that they were unbiassed, and that if he gave all the facts about monastic life brought to light by their inquiry, no modest eye could read his book. Here's a history

of the Abbey by the Warden, Sir James Fowler. And here's some scandal about the Cistercians (I've marked the place) in Walter Map's *Courtiers' Trifles*; he was a friend of Henry II, he gossiped, and believed in demons and mermen, but he lapsed into history at times. He hated Jews and Cistercians worse than anything else in the world. It's as well to keep an open mind."

At this point the gate clicked behind George and Miss Lister. As he passed up the garden to the house George said, "I'm going to call her Rosalind, for obvious reasons. She says I may drop the Miss because I'm so terribly old."

"Oh, I didn't say that!" cried the girl.

"Not precisely," said George, and went in.

Rosalind sat down by me on the grass. She was glowing and eager.

"Your brother is so kind and sympathetic," she said. "He has been letting me tell him all about my student days,

and my special group, and the lectures, and the rags, and the Museum parties, and things that I can't talk to Mummie about without making her feel unhappy because of not being able to afford them. It's so lovely to be able to talk about it to someone. I expect I bored Mr Palmer awfully, but he was very kind and pretended not. I never imagined he'd be interested in art. But he really does know a lot. He's awfully sound, isn't he ? "

" Mr Palmer has been agreeing with everything you said," Roger put in.

Rosalind looked at him with contempt. " What's the matter with you lately ? " she demanded. " I've never known you so disagreeable."

Roger muttered that he would take his disagreeableness away, and went.

I do hope George isn't going to fall in love with someone at least twenty-five years younger than he is. There's a leaky spot in everyone's common sense, and I may just have come upon George's. But I

won't cry out before I'm hurt. No, let me busy myself with Beaulieu.

Late in the eleventh century a group of Benedictine monks broke away from their Order and founded a reformed branch. Their first house was built on a marshy spot near Chalons, in France; the place got nicknamed "the Cistern," which became Cistertium or Citeaux. Thence this stricter kind of Benedictine was called a Cistercian. He slept on a straw pallet, ate no meat, and wore a cassock of white undyed wool. The Benedictine monk wore black. Map complains that although the Cistercians were dressed so coarsely, they wore many soft shirts beneath the humble robe. The third Abbot of Citeaux, Stephen Harding, a Dorset man, first made the Order famous.

The Order came to England in 1128. King John had many disputes with them, and about 1204 thought of ridding himself of the Cistercian abbots by a curious form of murder. He invited them to Lincoln,

and ordered his followers to mount their horses, charge the ecclesiastics, and trample them to death. No one obeyed. That night the superstitious king had one of his many nightmares, and woke up full of penitence. In proof of it, he founded the Abbey of Bellus Locus in the New Forest, for thirty Cistercian monks and an abbot, in 1204 or 1205. He endowed it with lands in Hampshire and Berkshire, and added many privileges.

It was more than forty-five years a-building. Stone was brought from Caen and from the Isle of Wight (in carts at low tide, tradition says), and marble from the Purbeck quarries. John died before it was finished, but Henry III, his Queen, his sons, the Bishops of Bath, Exeter, and Chichester, all came to the dedication in 1249. Fine processions rode from many quarters of woody England to that ceremony. The abbey was dedicated by William, Bishop of Winchester.

The first monks and Hugh the abbot

came from Citeaux. They had to make a feast for the Royal party, which cost them 500 marks. After it, Prince Edward, being ten years old, fell ill—childhood is the same all down the ages. The Queen remained at Beaulieu nursing him for three weeks. Then the unfortunate abbot got into trouble (1) for allowing a woman in the abbey contrary to Benedictine rule, and (2) for allowing secular people to eat meat in the abbey precincts. It appears that he was deposed for these offences.

Innocent III granted the right of sanctuary to Beaulieu, allowing the monks to shelter for life all (save heretics) who sought refuge there. In any consecrated church sanctuary was allowed, but for forty days only. Not merely Beaulieu Abbey, but all its grounds, were covered by the right. The Countess of Warwick, wife of the king-maker, fled there in 1471 after her husband was slain at Barnet, and Perkin Warbeck, after deserting his poor followers, sought sanctuary in 1497. Henry VII

spoke him fair, and the too credulous Pretender left the peace-territory, only to be hanged at Tyburn.

The Cistercians were divided into monks, generally learned men whose lives were given up to devotion and study, and lay-brothers, usually uneducated men who had also taken the triple vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience, but whose days were devoted to labour. They were "mechanics, weeders, shepherds, traders, neat-herds, swineherds."

It all makes an industrious, serene, attractive picture. Besides, it has been said that monks were better landlords to the poor than most, and the old idea of open hospitality never applied to the lord's castle, only to the monastery and convent. Sometimes, in rare collections of ancient furniture, one sees roughly carved cupboards, like small chests on legs, with the puzzling name of "livery tables." These were delivery tables, placed outside the monastery gate, and containing loaves for

any beggar who might pass. Next to bed, chair, table, and coffer, the delivery table is the oldest form of furniture our ancestors knew.[1]

But the selfless life of the Cistercians was marred—according to Map—by the monks' besetting sin of land-grabbing. If a monk desired neither wealth nor importance for himself, he desired it for his Order. Map tells on the authority of Roger, Archbishop of York, how a tree marked the boundary between pastures belonging to the monks and those of a soldier at Coxwold, and how one night the brethren dug up the tree and planted it farther on, not to their own disadvantage.

The monks of Bylands Abbey, he said, having vainly striven to eject a certain tenant, persuaded a servant to admit them at night, and slew the whole household, save one woman. She managed to escape,

[1] There is an interesting story of a dole cupboard from Beaulieu Abbey in Mr Rohan's *Confessions of a Dealer*.

and sought justice. Under threat of the ordeal by water, the traitor servant confessed that the monks had promised him absolution for all his sins if he opened the door to them, and he gave the names of the monks involved. He was hanged, but they were let alone, to raze the homestead and grow corn over the scene of the murder.

This love of property, even in its humblest forms, led them to hang an apple thief at Woolaston Wood: "the poor fellow had crept up to their fruit orchard to satisfy his hunger, and found therefrom, at the hands of the brothers, eternal respite."

Towards the end of the fifteenth century Innocent VIII found it necessary to issue a commission for a general investigation throughout England into the behaviour of the regular clergy. It appeared that the triple vow was ill-kept at many monasteries, and reprimands were issued. The same course was taken in 1511 by Archbishop Warham, and twelve years later Wolsey also fluttered dovecotes and rookeries in

this way. In 1535 Thomas Cromwell appointed three men, lawyers in holy orders, to visit, report upon, and make inventories of the treasures belonging to all religious houses and universities. The commissioners' statement, known as the Black Book of the Monasteries, was laid before the House of Parliament next year, and proved such hideous reading that members broke out with cries of " Down with them ! Down with them ! "

Two-thirds of the monasteries were condemned by the report. In one case an abbot and thirty-two priests were waited upon by a hundred and forty-four servants in livery ; thus they interpreted the vow of poverty, and the other parts of the triple vow were equally abused, according to the commissioners. All copies of the Black Book were afterwards destroyed by order of Queen Mary of sanguinary fame.

The suppression of the monasteries was voted, after a long debate. Members hoped that their sale, by enriching the Crown,

would lighten Henry VIII's demands on the taxpayer; but in vain.

Were the monasteries hives of saints or sinners, Cromwell would have dealt with them alike. His policy was to create an absolute monarchy, a king who could tax, legislate, and imprison at will—all for the good of the realm. One by one he hacked through the strands in the cable of English freedom.

The Church, powerful and sacred, dared to resist the King's will, to call Catherine his lawful Queen, and her child heir to the throne. Then, said Cromwell, the Church as it was known of old should cease to exist. Henry should be earthly head of the Church in England. The Articles of Religion should be drawn up, not by bishops in convocation, but by the King. Bishops, abbots, and parish priests should be ordered to preach against the Pope and proclaim Henry their spiritual head.

An oath affirming his supremacy was drawn up, and those whose conscience pre-

vented them from taking it perished in various manners. Sir Thomas More, whom the King had once encircled with a brotherly arm, was beheaded. The old Abbot of Glastonbury was taken out, one dreary November day, to a conical hill called Glastonbury Torre, and hanged where he could be seen by men at great distances. The Carthusians, honoured and loved by all, spared by the Black Book, were chained to pillars in a Newgate dungeon and left to die of jail fever and starvation. In a fortnight one of Cromwell's underlings was able to report that five were dead and the rest "almost dispatched by the hand of God, of which, considering their behaviour, I am not sorry." Friar Forest was burnt at Smithfield, and Cromwell went in state to witness it.

A rebellion broke out in the north, where the monks were well loved, and the suppression of the monasteries meant the suppression of many good schools. Thirty thousand armed men demanded reunion

with Rome, the removal of Cromwell, and Mary's reinstatement as heiress to the throne. Henry promised a free Parliament at York, and pardon. The insurgents broke up joyfully, thinking that their ends were gained. But a pretext was easily found to hang and behead all the gentry concerned, except Lady Bulmer, who was burnt at the stake.

It is said that Cromwell, though he hated "snuffing prelates," was not spiteful and cruel. He was simply that disastrous monster, a perfectly logical man with a political theory. He matched Robespierre and Lenin in his Reign of Terror and his excellent motives for tyranny. His careful notebooks tell the tale of his dispassionate system. "Item to see that the evidence be well sorted and the indictments well drawn against the said abbots and their complices. Item the Abbot of Reading to be sent down to be tried and executed at Reading with his complices. Item the Abbot of Glaston to be tried at Glaston,

and also executed there with his complices." Of an Irish monk he writes: "We cannot as yet get at the pith of his credence, whereby I am advised to-morrow to go to the Tower and see him set in the bracks (rack) and by torment compelled to confess the truth." He was a shrewd statesman, this merchant's clerk who rose to be England's master. He wrought many ecclesiastical and social reforms; his foreign policy would have prevented the Thirty Years' War if Henry had supported him. He was brave, for he stood by Wolsey in his disgrace. But at last he went too far with the King, by forcing him, for political reasons, into marriage with an ugly woman. His many enemies fell upon him suddenly at a meeting of the Privy Council, tearing his Orders from his breast and calling him traitor. He was condemned through "his own bloody laws," without trial, and was executed by a bungling headsman in 1540.

But what befell the Abbot of Beaulieu

when his abbey was suppressed in 1538? Nothing at all unpleasant. Thomas Stevens was called by some "a time-serving wretch," and by others a discreet fellow. He had let monastic property to his sister at a nominal rent; at the first hint of suppression he had sent Cromwell presents of pike, and now he was quite willing to sign anything. This complaisancy brought him a pension worth, in modern money, between six and seven hundred a year. He was also made Rector of Bentworth and treasurer of Salisbury Cathedral. The monks probably got forty shillings apiece, and leave to look for work. Stevens professed himself thankful to be rid of the "lewd monks" who had said unkind things of him. He died, in bed, in 1540.

No one seems to have been sorry to see the ruin of the hallowed building except the colony of poor debtors and felons who had lived on its grounds in sanctuary. What became of them? Historians only

CHAPTER HOUSE ARCHES, BEAULIEU ABBEY

[*F. Salmon*

PARISH CHURCH, LYMINGTON

say that the lead and stones of the abbey went to build castles at Hurst and Calshot, and that Thomas Wriothesley bought the estate of Beaulieu.

Its annual gross value had been given by the commissioners as £428, 6s. 8½d. It was bought for £1350, 6s. 8d. (the sum represents ten times the amount in modern purchasing power). Wriothesley, afterwards Earl of Southampton, was one of Henry VIII's executors, and the grandfather of Shakespeare's patron. Later, Beaulieu passed by marriage into the Montagu family, who have taken great care to preserve the ruins, and have thrown them open to the public.

CHAPTER VIII

ALONG THE COAST TO BEAULIEU

Buckland Rings and the Romans—Lymington—Sowley—Buckler's Hard—Beaulieu—Boldre

EVERY book that has ever been written about this part of the world contains the same stern sentence: "The only way to see the Forest is on foot." Never was such unanimity. They may dispute as to whether Charles I was a prisoner at Hurst Castle for one week or twenty-six days; they may differ by a year or two over the founding of Beaulieu Abbey; but the authorities are at one accord in despising, hating, and pillorying those who, either in post-chaise or motor-car, have ridden instead of walked. How, then, are we to excuse ourselves for having driven to

Beaulieu ? Surely, in another world, the shades of Gilpin and Wise will call us to account. Vain, in that crystal atmosphere, where minds shall be as transparent as brooks, to say that we took a car for the sake of giving the Listers a treat. We shall have to own honestly, "It was better to get to Beaulieu by car than not at all. On earth we had rather inferior suits of clay ; they would not have borne us farther than Lymington, and even there we should have arrived in the posture of that bishop who was granted as much New Forest land as he could crawl round in a day." Then the spirits will look at us as Cobbett says he looked at the Squire, "with the head a little on one side, and with the cheek drawn up from the left corner of the mouth, expressive of anything rather than a sense of inferiority."

By the forbidden method we travelled along the little strip of coast left to the Forest, then up Beaulieu River, and back by the heath to Boldre and the woods. This southern part of the Forest has not the strong

character of the rest, but its lanes and farms and riverside are very pretty.

We began by going out of our way to Buckland Rings. Set among ordinary rural scenery, there arises an abrupt tree-crowned hill which bears some seven acres of earthworks. This camp is the most important in the Forest. It is said to have been built by Vespasian when he was attacking the Isle of Wight. Lymington, about a mile farther on, was a Roman station, and quantities of coins have been found there. Elsewhere there are smaller camps and several pottery sites, the most important being in the northern part of the Forest at Sloden and Crock Hill. At Crock Hill excavators found a tool and a coin lying among broken earthenware, as though some dramatic end had come to the work. New Forest ware was used almost throughout Roman Britain. It was a good hard pottery, with a red-purple glaze, often decorated with beautiful scroll designs. There are several specimens in the British Museum.

The only other Roman thing left in the Forest is a trace of road at Lepe, just beyond Beaulieu River. Lepe used to be the usual point of embarkation for the Isle of Wight, even up to Tudor days. In Roman times the passage was probably still fordable. The road at Lepe is continued on the Isle, where it is known as Rue Street. In the Forest, names like Rue Copse and Rue Common mark its passage. This was part of the chain which linked Winchester to Southampton, and Ringwood to the west. Along it there journeyed not only glittering legions but barbarian traders bringing merchandise which was exported from the Isle of Wight to Gaul.

Mr Heywood Sumner ought to give us a long, leisurely, learned book purely on the Forest roads. That would include, of course, the old trackways of prehistoric man who worshipped at Stonehenge, the Tin-way from Cornwall, the Salt-way from Lymington, the British track from St Michael's Mount to Dover, the Saxon war-

paths threading the woods about Ringwood and Burley, the Roman ones, the mediæval ones (recognisable from the waste land on either hand, where all undergrowth was cut back a bowshot so as to prevent ambush), and the tollgate roads made by eighteenth-century landowners who were tired of pits and swamps, broken axles and cracked knees. It would be a romantic volume.

From Buckland Rings we went to Lymington, situated at the mouth of a river which was nearly all mud-flats and tipsy boats when we arrived. This little town with its broad, empty high street, and prim old houses advertising for lodgers, has a forlorn air. Very ancient, it has no ancient buildings to show. In Tudor times greater than Portsmouth, it is now but a stepping-stone to the Isle of Wight. A fashionable watering-place in Georgian days, it is now to Bournemouth what a pimpernel is to a peony. It is like a former beauty who is dragging out a neglected old age in a boarding-house.

The salterns made Lymington rich. In the old days, when large numbers of cattle were killed and salted at the approach of winter, salt was of great importance. Probably the trade was in full swing here in Vespasian's time, and it was hardly affected when Lymington was afforested by the Conqueror. During fourteenth-century invasions by the French it continued, and flourished through the Civil Wars. Those were stirring times for the town. It aided and abetted Prince Charles when he lay in Yarmouth Roads trying to rescue his father from Carisbrooke. Later on it sent a hundred men to Monmouth's standard. But in the nineteenth century its salt trade was taken away by Cheshire. The last saltern ceased to be worked in 1865, and the Lymingtonians were left lamenting that "the commerce which eighty years before had paid £50,000 into the Exchequer, lined the shore with a busy population, and covered the Channel with merchantmen, has now totally ceased."

Crossing Lymington River by a toll bridge, we travelled through meadows and cornfields which went down to the very shore. The air was salt, yet sweet with hot verdure too. Every now and then we saw the blue flashing waters, while the cliffs of the Isle of Wight dominated the landscape. In a tree-clustered road we stopped to see Sowley Pond. This lovely lake of some hundred acres is shut off by woods and fringed with reeds. Wild-fowl flock here from the Channel. Mrs Lister told us how once Roger came here with some guns, and so great was the number of birds on the pond, that when they got up the sky for a moment was darkened as by a cloud. Sowley Pond was used as a fish preserve by the monks of Beaulieu. They are said to have thrown a golden statue of the Virgin into the lake rather than let it be melted down by Henry VIII's commissioners; but it has never been recovered. Later, iron-smelting was done here, and Sowley Pond was turned into a dam, which worked the great hammer neces-

sary to beat out the slag. Staffordshire soon outstripped Sowley, and now it lies as lonely as it did when wolves came down to drink here. Fortunately, the road which runs so near it is not a highway.

From Sowley we twisted past Bergerie, the monks' sheep farm, to St Leonard's Grange. This farmstead was once worked by lay-brothers from Beaulieu, who had their own chapel, since they had not time for the long tramp to Beaulieu to attend divine service. A pretty farmhouse stands in the lee of the monks' grand old barn, which, with a little help from younger bricks, is still doing its work. The chapel has not survived so well. This must be the place Cobbett stumbled upon and described in his *Rural Rides*. In those days the chapel was part goose-pen and part sty, and he saw a hog rubbing itself against the ruins of a font or holy-water stoup. The farmer gave Cobbett some excellent beer and cheese, but no information, except that the estate now belonged to the Duchess of

Buccleuch. He never could make out, he said, what this place and the one at Beaulieu had been. Cobbett promised to inquire into their history when he was in London, and write to inform Farmer Biel. Later, he decided that this farmstead must be the hospital of Knights Templars which really stood at North Baddesley; but he easily got at the truth about Beaulieu Abbey. Cobbett broke out characteristically:

"Now, Farmer John Biel, I dare say that you are a very good Protestant; and I am a monstrous good Protestant too. We cannot bear the Pope, nor 'they there priests that make men confess their sins and go down upon their marrow bones before them.' But, Master Biel, let us give the devil his due; and let us not act worse by those Roman Catholics (who, by the bye, were our forefathers) than we are willing to act by the devil himself. Now then, here were a set of monks, and also a set of Knights Templars. Neither of them could marry; of course neither of them could

have wives and families. They could possess no private property; they could bequeath nothing; they could own nothing, but that which they owned in common with the rest of their body. They could hoard no money; they could save nothing. Whatever they received, as rent for their lands, they must necessarily spend upon the spot, for they could not quit that spot. They did spend it all upon the spot: they kept all the poor; Beuley, and all about Beuley saw no misery, and had never heard the damned name of pauper pronounced, as long as those monks and Templars continued. . . . You and I, Farmer John Biel, would much rather be life-holders under monks and Templars than rack-renters under duchesses. The monks and the Knights were the *lords* of their manors; but the farmers under them were not rack-renters; the farmers under them held by lease of lives, continued in the same farms from father to son for hundreds of years; they were real yeomen and not miserable rack-renters, such as now till the

land of this once happy country, and who are little better than drivers of the labourers for the profit of the landlords."

Cobbett added that he did not *know* whether the Duchess was a wicked landlord, but evidently he preferred to assume that she was. In the same way he did not know anything about the Squire, at whom he drew up the left corner of his cheek, but gave him a sneer in case he deserved it. Cobbett had been set to scare birds before he was old enough to climb a stile properly; he had been lashed across his childish face by a huntsman; and he had hungered sharply as a British private soldier: these things are not calculated to induce generosity of judgment.

Of course the famous Radical disapproved of the New Forest with all his might. The tall, straightly built man, with ruddy face, sharp eyes, and "peculiarly cynical mouth," dressed in dust-coloured coat, breeches, and gaiters, who rode through it in 1826, was fuming at the Game Laws all the way. However, it afforded him some satisfaction

to count a hundred and forty pigs feeding in one place—a sight not to be had nowadays.

After St Leonards we turned away from the sea, and went inland, following Beaulieu River. Roger had said that we must see Buckler's Hard.

There was a great shipbuilding yard here in the eighteenth century which sent out many hearts of oak with famous names. When a man-o'-war was launched people came from far and near, by every sort of means, to the tune of ten thousand. But as it was with Lymington and Sowley so it was with bustling, thriving Buckler's Hard at last. The building firm undertook four ships at once, and failed to complete them in contract time. Ruin followed. It was as though the Forest Spirit, grieving for the 2000 oaks felled to make one ship, and hating the dark foreign fir trees newly planted for the sake of getting wood suitable for topmasts and bowsprits, had cursed the builder's yard. Or perhaps it was the ghost of the Conqueror who, in his lifetime,

frowned upon building and population lest it should frighten the deer. Or it may have been the ghosts of defeated Iberians avenging themselves on Saxon, Norman, and Dane.

We turned down a side road which used to see coaches, farm-waggons, and horses bringing crowds to watch a launch. Then suddenly we were there. It took our breath away. A brief row of old red-brown cottages, all joined together, faced another row across a broad strip of grass and road. At the end lay the river, wooded to the brim on the opposite bank. There was a tiny, crazy, toylike pier. Nothing more. If the cottages had been stragglers, separate entities with gardens, they would have seemed natural there. But these were crammed together, after the way of town-dwellings, and obviously it was a street we saw before us. Then where were the by-streets, the shops, the inn, the gossips? Where the bigger houses of foremen and clerk? Surely there must be something else? Nothing but river and trees.

Even in the serene June sunlight it seemed a little sinister. I did not want to knock at one of the cottage doors, though they announced the sale of minerals or teas in unghostly fashion. The yard closed in 1809, and of course the people ruined by that catastrophe must have been dead long ago; yet I felt that the creatures who lived in those houses would be like the terrible, mysterious old women who live in De la Mare's short stories—not exactly ghosts, and not in the least human.

I was glad to go on past Beufre, the monks' ox farm, into the cheerful village of Beaulieu. The river, moving slowly through gold-specked meadows, divides the village from the ruins, the church, and Lord Montagu's house, which is built on the site of the prior's lodging with lawns sloping to the water's edge. Swallows were chasing to and fro over the water-flowers. A sound of singing came from the church.

We went into the abbey by a thirteenth-century gateway, which is the only one of

its kind left in England. Above the arch there are three small windows, whence the porter might peer from his lodging at the knights or beggars who sought admittance. This was the only opening in the great precincts wall which enclosed fifty-eight acres.

Everything except the lay-brothers' house is in ruins, but the cloisters are still impressive and beautiful. Greensward makes a floor. The old walls are lovingly cloaked and thatched with flowers. Tall yews or cypresses stand at the corners of the lawn. The church forms one side. Music came from it, making the abbey seem still a religious house. Almost one could dream that monks were singing the office; that others were at work in the fields still called the vineyards; that an old monk pastured hundreds of lambs at Bergerie; that the mill turned at Beaulieu dam and lay-brothers were mowing at St Leonards. Here the monks walked and studied in silence; if they wished to talk they went to the parlour. On the same

side is the library, through whose arch, filled now by a wrought-iron gate, the graves of the Montagus are seen. Between the two rooms are the three fine arches of the chapter-house where matters of discipline and business were discussed. The dorter used to be above. Each monk had a cell of seven or eight feet by six feet. There were observation windows in the door like a prison's. They had a shelf for writing, a small prayer-table, and a religious picture.

There is little enough left of the misericorde, which was an indulgence-room where, from the fifteenth century, monks were allowed to eat meat three times a week. In the proper dining-place they had to keep the proper Benedictine rule. But there is still less left of the church. Only a line of gravel shows where the fine building stood, three hundred and thirty-six feet in length, and a hundred and eighty-six across the transepts from north to south.

The lay-brothers' house is now a museum.

Beside some rather startling waxwork monks there are the grave-slabs of John's wife Isabella, and one that probably belonged to Edward I's little daughter Eleana. The rarity of the collection is a heart-coffin of stone; it is supposed to have held the heart of John's younger son, Earl of Cornwall and Poictou and King of the Romans.

Choir practice was over, so we went into the Parish Church. Once it was the monks' dining-room. From the enchanting thirteenth-century pulpit one of the brothers read improving works to the diners: the steps to it are contained in the natural thickness of the walls. The roof dates from Edward III. Somehow there is not the hallowed feeling of a church about this converted refectory.

After the pretty village comes what Cobbett calls "the intolerable heath" and Hudson the "dreary wilderness." It is without interesting features, save for Hatchet Pond, of curious shape, and for the grave-barrows of ancient man, whose

curses, I think, ruined abbey, salterns, ironworks, builder's yard, and the first Duke of Montagu's scheme to make Beaulieu a depot for West Indian trade when he owned the Isle of Ste Lucia.

But at Boldre the Forest changed its mood. Woods smiled. White flowers dimpled the river flowing under a five-arched bridge. Cottages nestled among gardens. Up on a hill the low grey church, with its pink tiles and dumpy tower, had a kindly look like an old face in a sun-bonnet. Inside it is whitewashed and plain, as though it wore a big clean apron. It goes back to Norman times. Gilpin, who wrote *Forest Scenery*, was vicar here from 1771 to 1804, and is buried in the churchyard. After his death his sketches were sold to endow the first parish school. Southey was married here to Caroline Bowles, authoress of *Chapters on Churchyards*.

Boldre was like a happy ending to a sad story.

CHAPTER IX

ALONG THE COAST TO CHRISTCHURCH

Hurst Castle—The Poets' Corner—Christchurch Priory

I HAVE no longer any doubt about George and Rosalind. He hired a car to drive himself the other day, and she sat in front with him: Mrs Lister and I were behind. We went to Christchurch. At the Priory gates we saw a Rolls-Royce discharging a party of fat, elderly, overdressed women. The Listers had gone on. George said, "The wrong women always have the clothes. I've never seen a woman in diamonds and a fur cloak who looked worthy of them. I'd like to see Rosalind dressed like that; she'd carry it off all right."

I saw the picture at once: the whole

Opera House turning its glasses on tall, rose-cheeked Rosalind, jewels in her dark hair, sables thrown over her golden dress, long white gloves hiding her work-roughened hands, and George at her elbow, a little over-acting his unconsciousness.

But I saw more than that. I saw the drawing-room filled with lacquer furniture and immense cushions; I saw the monthly dinner-parties becoming less and less elderly and intimate; I saw peculiar young men being rude to George; I saw George struggling vainly to be one of them; I saw Rosalind ten years hence subtly conveying to everyone that her husband had never understood her. Yet it is useless to argue with lunacy. George, who would never appoint a manager without the most careful inquiries into his suitability, is going to tie himself for ever to an entirely unsuitable wife. It is not only age that stands between them, it is the make of mind. George is a late Georgian mahogany chest-of-drawers, solid, serviceable, unpretentious.

Rosalind is an early Wembley writing-desk, hand-painted in "amusing" designs, shaky to write at, and unable to accommodate more than two postcards and a postage stamp at the same time. The home ritual that is so dear to George, the conservative cooking, the sober luxury, will all be called "stuffy" and turned out of doors: I don't know what she will do about his politics.

Well, he hears nightingales, and will not listen to reason. When he tells me, I shan't say a word against it. I shall take the empty cottage in Brockenhurst opposite that shallow brooklet called "the Splash." I shall grow lavender and bees and new-laid eggs, and go to church often, and read Crabbe.

I am not in the mood to write about our drive. Roger would excuse me, because nearly all the ground was beyond the present Forest border, although once it felt the Game Law as heavily as Lyndhurst. We went along the Lymington Road, but turned off to the right, and followed the

coast to Christchurch. There were some exquisite half-hours, and there were some bad moments of villadom.

As we passed Everton, which was once infested by wild boars, Rosalind told us that Charles I replenished the stock from France. They multiplied exceedingly, but were killed off in the Civil Wars. By pretty Lymore we came down to the marshes of Keyhaven, where happy little boys were wading in mud; thence a narrow arm of shingle runs a mile out to sea, and at the end of it is Hurst Castle, the plain stout block house built by Henry VIII. It is now starkly clean, for coast-guards have replaced the Tudor gunners at sixpence a day who held it against invasion. Henry VIII was very earnest about strengthening the coast defences; he also built Calshot on what was then Forest land by Southampton Water. But he would have prepared better for war if he had not struck so hard at Southampton's prosperity. He forbade the export of wool,

stopped the Levant trade, and almost ruined the port which had flourished in the fourteenth century. By the time of the Armada it could not even provide two ships and a pinnace for defence. Its recovery was very gradual; not till the nineteenth century did it reach greatness, saved by colonisation and Atlantic trade.

The Isle of Wight is only a mile away, and Lord Tennyson's monument is plain to see on its downs. When Colonel Cobbit seized Charles I at Carisbrooke, he brought his prisoner across to Hurst Castle. It was a stormy December day in 1642. He was received by a gaunt, black-bearded Puritan captain, holding a partisan in his hand. A feeling of gloom settled on the cavaliers. There the King stayed, walking up and down the beach, watching ships pass, and islands of shingle rise, grow samphire, and sink again, until he was taken to trial.

We left Hurst for Milford, which has a pleasant Norman-English Church, and thence went to Hordle. Where the old

salterns and mill and church of Domesday once stood, the waves break. A group of common villas hold the cliff; the village of Hordle has retreated far inland, afraid of crumbling cliffs or shocked by this architecture. Perhaps the most interesting of all New Forest finds was made at Hordle, whose cliffs are famous for their fossils. It was a little jade implement. How did this Eastern thing get here in those dim ages? What wandering tribe brought it, and by what route? No one can guess.

Farther on we came to a pretty glen with woods and streams; it is called Chewton Bunny, and runs right into the sea.

George refused to take the second-class road which leads to Mudeford, although Walter Scott stayed there with his friend Stewart Rose. Scott composed a great deal of *Marmion* as he rode about the Forest. Coleridge also stayed in the village the year after Waterloo, and Southey had a cottage at Burton nearby, where he lived for two years, and wrote the English

Eclogues. This is certainly the Poets' Corner of the district.

By Somerford we came to Christchurch. It is surely one of the most lovable towns in England. The Stour and the Avon encircle it, whence it was anciently called Twinham Burn. Flowery meadows surround it. Its Priory Church, begun by Flambard in Rufus' time, completed by the Earl of Devon under Henry I, and restored in the thirteenth century, is exceedingly lovely. Its village-like streets are wide and quiet. Exhilarating airs come blowing from the sea, some two miles off, where Hengistbury Head stands guard, well fortified by the earthworks of Early Iron Age or Celtic man. He had a harbour settlement there, and traded with the Continent just before the Roman Conquest. In spite of him, though, the Gaulish Belgæ landed at Hengistbury, and were occupying Hampshire in Roman days.

There was a castle belonging to the Earl of Devon at Christchurch, as all readers of

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CHRISTCHURCH PRIORY

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COTTAGE AT SWAN GREEN

The White Company know, but only a jagged stump is left. Below it is the ruin of a house which dates from Stephen's time. The conventual buildings have disappeared. Where the refectory stood an ugly modern house has been built right up against the church, shutting that side off from the water meadows. In digging the foundations for this interloper fourth-century tombs were found. Men worshipped here before history was written. It is supposed that St Augustine's missionaries set up a Christian Church on the ruin of a pagan temple or sacred grove, and that this same site was used for the Priory, after pulling down an old Saxon monastery then standing on it.

Flambard, whom we must ever bless for Durham Cathedral and Christchurch Priory, was heartily cursed in his day. He was supposed to be the son of a monk and a sorceress. By adroit flattery and by his cleverness as a lawyer, this obscure Norman priest rose to be Rufus' favourite, his chief

justiciary, and Bishop of Durham. He invented new methods of taxation and increased the terrors of the Forest law. After Rufus' death he was flung into the Tower, but on his prison allowance of 2s. a day he contrived to make the garrison drunk and to escape by a rope ladder. After some time of exile in Normandy he was reinstated at Durham, where he made a model bishop in his old age. He is held by some authorities to have been the earliest writer on English law.

The monks of Christchurch were a drunken set known to townsfolk as "the Priory lubbers." They had only one book, a treatise on English law, as we are told by Leland, the first and last man to hold the post of King's antiquary. Henry VIII gave him special privileges and a salary, but when this brilliant scholar was about to turn the results of his long researches into his greatest book, he suddenly became mad. If the monks were ill-provided with literature they were rich in relics. The Priory

was like that Roman Church of which Walpole wrote: "Among other things of great sanctity there is a set of gnashing of teeth, the grinders very entire; a bit of the worm that never dies, preserved in spirits," and "a crow of Saint Peter's cock. . . . The good man that showed us all these commodities was got into such a train of calling them the blessed this and the blessed that, that at last he showed us a bit of the blessed fig tree that Christ cursed." One winces at such a passage, but not less than at the gabble of the "good men" who exhibit such things. Christchurch waxed fat because of these relics. Great people wished to be buried near them, and left the Priory lands and money for masses. But the dissolution came. Prior John Draper had no mind to be martyred, and retired on a pension. A beautiful little chantry built by him inclines us to think leniently of his unvalorous discretion.

The plumpish, white-moustached verger of Christchurch is an ornament to his voca-

tion. He has a passionate pride in his church; the verger's usual mechanical narrative and threadbare jest dropped from him the moment he heard an enthusiastic word from Rosalind: after that they sang against each other. He showed us everything: the excellent rood-screen; the miserere seats, all humorously carved save one which has three plain acanthus leaves, and is the oldest in England; the fine stone reredos illustrating the stem of Jesse; the miraculous beam which grew longer overnight when the Priory was building; the tombs of a knight and lady in the Lady Chapel who left money that masses might be said for their souls "as long as the world shall last," which money Henry VIII confiscated, except for 10s. a week that he left for the vicar's stipend; the alabaster tomb of Sir John Chydioke, who fell in the Wars of the Roses, supposed by the country folk to have magical healing properties; a polished stone altar-slab full of fossils; the almost outworn grave-stone of Sally

Williams, aged seventy-nine, who died of grief because twelve years before a chimney had fallen on her brother-in-law as he lay in bed and killed him; the Shelley memorial by Weekes; an old silk Jack, dating from the time before the union with Ireland; the lovely Chantry Chapel with its delicate Renaissance work, prepared for her tomb by Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury, but empty because Henry VIII had her beheaded after two years' imprisonment on a charge of treason. Her chief crime seems to have been that she was the mother of Cardinal Pole. She was a niece of Edward IV, and so a kinsman. On the scaffold she refused to lay her head on the block: "Let traitors do so," she said; "I am none." The executioner had to slaughter her standing erect. When the Commissioners for the Suppression of the Monasteries came to Christchurch they reported of her chantry tomb that they had "causyd" it "to be defacyd, and all the armys and badgis clerly to be delete";

so they are, but the whole remains beautiful still.

Of course the verger did his duty, and recited to us that the nave as far as the clerestory is Norman, the tower, choir, and Lady Chapel Perpendicular, the clerestory and great north porch Early English. Of course he bade us notice the hatchet work in the Norman bays, and informed us that the north porch was unequalled in England. But really he liked telling us about Sally Williams and the visitors' book best. As he showed us the Kaiser's signature he said, "Here's the man that brought all that trouble on us. When I showed him round he said, 'I shall come back.' He meant to come back as King of England, mind you. After the War a foreign gentleman came, and when he saw the Kaiser's writing he said, 'Do let me put my name after his; we ought to be together. I was a particular friend of his.' But they tell me his drawings helped to turn the whole world against that bloodthirsty man. Our

War Memorial is close by." Under a huge William, Emperor and King, there is a neat Louis Raemakers, Dutch Cartoonist.

Outside the Priory one's eye is caught at once by the Norman turret, with its diaper tracery and interlaced arches. The porch strikes one by its fine solidity. The stream flowing at the foot of the building and the low meadows below make perfect foils for the grandeur of the church.

We returned by the great woods, a shorter route.

Mrs Lister made Roger come in to spend the evening. He listened dully to our declaration that no one ought to visit the New Forest without seeing Christchurch. He merely said that it was a pity we hadn't seen Mr Hart's unique bird museum, which was soon to be closed to the public for ever, or Pritchard's famous Alpine nurseries, and then lapsed into silence. As he was going, he said to Mrs Lister :

" Oh, about that broken lamp. I can make

a good job of it, but you must spare it for a day or two."

Mrs Lister told him that he was very clever, and too kind to them.

"I'm glad to do anything I can," he said formally. "Perhaps I shan't be able to much longer."

"Why?"

"I am going to London," he said, "to look for a job."

"You'll have to go farther than that, then," said George.

"There's always Australia," said Roger. He was very red and awkward, the centre of attention.

"But, my dear boy," cried Mrs Lister, "you'll be simply miserable. You know how wretched you were at school and in barracks. You'll never feel settled except in the Forest, and you'll never keep a post, with your unpunctuality. Your nature isn't fitted for the world. What do you want besides your books and your fiddle and your birds?"

"I want money," said Roger.

"But you've got some," Rosalind exclaimed.

"Thirty shillings a week," said Roger.

"Well, you can't starve. I call it jolly wrong of a man who needn't work to do someone else out of a job in these days. Anyway," she finished, "you can't go just yet, because *I'm* not going to take Gourmet to the butcher next Monday, and we can't afford to keep pigs as pets."

"Yes, I have my uses," said Roger, with a fierce, sullen look at her. "Good-night, Mrs Lister. Good-night, everyone." Off he marched.

I believe we have an anxiety in common.

CHAPTER X

IN THE NORTH

Solitude—Wood Green and Nomansland—Smugglers and Poachers—Deer—The Barrows—A Murder

WHEN I leave my old home it will not be for Brockenhurst after all. Now that I know the northern part of the New Forest, and love it as one should love a birthplace, the only thing left for me to do is to die there.

Ridges and slopes of heather ; strong cold breezes ; wide views of the tree country below, of the river, the sea, and the Isle of Wight ; rare but beautiful woods like Anses, with its twisting stream, and Sloden, with its whitebeams and yews ; a thousand little brooks draining from the bare hills into valleys overgrown with bracken and thorn—such is the northern Forest. Since

it has no abbey ruins to show, motor-coaches come not here, man and car do no offence. Truly it would be of little use, for the only things worth seeing on the highway are Stony Cross, where four roads meet on the highest part of the Forest, and Picket Post, where there is a fine view of Ridley Wood, the moor, and the island hills, where, moreover, there is a small cottage with a monstrous copper kettle hanging out as a sign that teas may be had. You must trudge if you would see the columbines and butterfly orchises under the trees of Pinnick and Redshoot, or the wide ferny valley of Latchmore. There is no high road to Iron's Well, formerly the Leper's Well, whose waters cure dogs of the mange and human beings of eye trouble ; walkers may find it at a place called Eyeworth on the map, but Ivare by Domesday and the natives. Only foot-passengers can reach the point just above the Lodge in the woods of Bramble Hill, which has the widest view of the whole Forest.

There seem to be no tradesmen's vans in this part, and even the tramps, civilly called "travellers," who are everywhere else in the Forest, are not seen; nor the gypsies either, for there is hardly any population to sell to or beg from. After much moor we came upon one village which consisted of three cottages, a cricket-pitch, a pond, and an inn. There must be other habitations within reasonable distance, unless the innkeeper is a pure philanthropist; but nothing else was to be seen with the naked eye.

I think I shall not live there. The choice lies between Nomansland and Wood Green. Wood Green runs down a hillside and scatters itself at the bottom. The whole village is drowning in orchard trees. There is one very charming farmhouse with a garden of lupins and irises. Above Wood Green there are foxglove woods, but below it a stream winds through buttercup meadows, and there are cornfields splashed with poppies. So, although it is just on the

right side of the border, it has not the true Forest character, and Nomansland has it.

According to a delightful article by H. M. Livens which I read in Roger's tattered copy of the *Salisbury Times* for 1910, Nomansland was founded by a gypsy in the eighteenth century. Two or three young bachelors followed, built them houses of clay mixed with heather, and then wooed brides up to this landlord-less paradise. The population has now reached the grand total of some two hundred and fifty souls, who speak of their village as "the City." The City, which lies in the Forest according to nature, is just beyond it according to the map, except for one doorstep. So the villagers enjoy all the advantages of wood and moor without ever having felt the irksomeness of the Game Law. I do not know whether the first settlers won their plots by the old right of "keyhole tenure," which allowed a man to claim Crown land as his own if he could build a house on it in one night, and have a fire alight on the

hearth by dawn. But in any case they have always been an independent community, and when, some eighty years ago, one of them was appointed to collect the first county rate to be levied on Nomansland, he was too shocked at the newness of the idea to take any steps. He felt sure that his neighbours would regard the proceedings as something monstrous and tyrannical, and he feared they would identify him with this oppressive thing. At last the police came, with dreadful threatenings, and the poor man paid the rate for the whole village—6s. 6d.—from his own pocket. Now it was hard for a man to earn more than 7s. 6d. a week in those days (women and children eked it out by making small bundles of wood for fire-lighting to sell in Salisbury), so the collector was fain to recover his money, and sent a little daughter on the hateful errand. But she received such a torrent of abuse from one who was rated at a penny farthing that she was soon discouraged.

Nomansland used to be the headquarters of a smuggling gang. Roger had already told me that nearly everyone in the Forest had a hand in this business. Sometimes the brandy was landed near Lymington, or from Southampton Water, but oftenest the guilty ship hung about near Hengistbury Head. At dusk a boat manned by forty stout oarsmen would put in to shore. Then a procession of men and ponies would wind off into the Forest. There is a hollow-way on the west side of Ridley Wood called the Smugglers' Meeting-Place. Until the kegs could be disposed of they were hidden in marl-pits and covered in leaves, or sunk in ponds. The simple fellow you saw trying to rake the moon out of a pond was not really under the impression that it was a cheese, and you might have spared your penny and your pity! Recently a cottage was discovered to have a little room, not a mere cupboard, hidden in its chimney, and doubtless many a keg was stored there, with venison for company now and then.

All this sounds a little romantic, and no meek income-tax payer can help admiring the smugglers' brave efforts to cheat that vague entity, the Crown. But admiration grows chill when one hears of a shoemaker who had given evidence against the gang, and disappeared for ever a few nights later. Then there was the excise officer who was called to his door one night, and had his brains dashed out on the threshold. Even worse, reminiscent of Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard*, is the story of the Lymington smuggler-bandits, near whose lair a well was found choked with the bodies of thirty murdered people.

Perhaps such violence must be expected in districts where the law has been a tyrant instead of a protector to the people, and men have been accustomed to breaking it with a light conscience. Even the monks of Beaulieu were convicted of venison-stealing, and so was Walter de Kanc, Steward of the Forest for Edward I. The monks were fined forty marks and de

Kanc £5000, "and his life at the mercy of the King and Queen." In the eighteenth century (and the early nineteenth) men were transported for poaching. Who can forget Elizabeth Fry's description of seeing a coach-load of convicts coming to the docks? Those on the top could not descend because they were all chained together, so they were dragged down anyhow like luggage. The prison ship might lie in dock for weeks, but during that time, and on the long voyage, no employment was provided for the wretched creatures cooped up in her. As for their chances of living honestly on the other side, a judge said that it was better to hang a man or woman outright than to set them in a vicious circle of crime by transporting them. Nevertheless poaching went on, and one man boasted of killing a hundred bucks a year in the Forest. He had a gun which unscrewed into three pieces and was easily concealed in his clothes; he also had a secret larder which no gamekeeper could ever find. The

keepers are said to have borne him no more malice than one might bear an acrostic; but often poachers and gamekeepers did come to blows, and the small lead-weighted wooden truncheon, called a "squoyle," which squirrel hunters hurl at their quarry, has cracked a keeper's skull before now. This weapon could be carried in the pocket, and was handier than a gun. Besides, if you fired at a keeper, whether you hit him or not, you were hanged. If you stole a colt or a sheep you were hanged. In spite of *The Rape of the Lock* and *A Sentimental Journey*, in spite of Zoffany and Adam, the Augustan age had not advanced one step from the eleventh-century code which punished theft as heavily as murder.

Yet poaching went on. In more modern days the punishment for deer-stealing was six months for a first offence, and a year and a day for the second. To have been to jail on this charge was not regarded as a slur. Families were brought up on venison. Every cart in the Forest had a double

bottom. It was a proverb that "Nobody asks who killed the deer."

The Deer Removal Act must have pinched many a labourer's stomach. It was bad for the Forest too, because keepers used to lop branches for the deer to feed upon, and this pollarding was good for the trees. The oldest and most vigorous trees are almost all pollards, like the Knightwood oak, but holly and ivy were the favourite "broust" for deer. There are three kinds of deer in the New Forest—the red, the roe, and the fallow. The particular New Forest brand of fallow deer differs from any found elsewhere, and in Millais' *British Deer* it is suggested that they are descendants of Asiatic fallow deer from the shores of the Sea of Marmora. All kinds are now very scarce, especially the red ; it is in the lonely northern district that there is most hope of seeing them.

When Roger told me so, I said, "That is the best of this part of the Forest, it has no 'places of historic interest,' so it is undisturbed."

He begged me not to run away with that idea. To his way of thinking, there is more history crowded into this part than into any other. There is King's Garn Gutter, where men have found sharks' teeth, fish scales, shells, and fruit which dropped from a tropical forest into some river like the Amazon. There are Eyeworth, Gorley Hill, and Dazel, where labourers have chanced upon the axe-heads and flint knives of Neolithic man who lived about four thousand years ago. He was a hunter and herdsman who lived on the hills. Stonehenge was his work. Probably it was in his day that the tide of the Dorset coast and the action of the Solent River combined to break away the chalk barrier which united the Isle of Wight to the mainland. Neolithic man buried his dead sitting up, with chin on knees. But the New Forest barrows belong to his heir, the Bronze Age man who cremated his dead and buried the urns which held their ashes. He was a craftsman and a sower of crops besides a

hunter. He probably lived between five hundred to a thousand years before Christ. He was followed by Iron Age man, a superior creature who spun and wove and traded with Europe. After that came wave after wave of invasion from the Continent—Celts, Brythons, Gauls, and Romans. Their camps are clear on almost every Forest hill and their graves on every Forest plain. Sir Walter Scott is said to have been the first excavator here. Hitherto the poor folk had called the barrows giants' graves, or pixies' caves, while the rich ones had regarded them as a sort of natural phenomenon, as though the earth had broken out in pimples round Beaulieu heath and Fritham.

Few men can linger by these barrows without a stirring of the imagination. How did he live, who was buried below? What slaves perished in his funeral pyre, in the great ring of charcoal which surrounds his urn? What does he know now, that we break our hearts to know? Richard Jefferies used to climb a hill to say his

strange prayers by one of these ancient graves. "Resting by the tumulus, the spirit of the man who had been interred there was to me really alive, and quite close. This was quite natural, as natural and simple as the grass waving in the wind, the bees humming, and the larks' songs. Only by the strongest effort of the mind could I understand the idea of extinction; that was supernatural, requiring a miracle; the immortality of the soul natural, like earth." He would let his mind go back through two thousand years of dawn and starlight, mist and sunshine, blue butterflies and thyme flowers, chaffinches and ringdoves, to the life of the ancient warrior; he would let his mind leap forward to the time when two thousand years should have passed over his own grave like cloud shadows. He would laugh at Time, which was so easily outstripped by Thought. There is no Time, he would say, but only Eternity: we are both in Eternity, the buried man and I.

Hudson would come to the barrows for

the sake of companionship. Only among the ghosts of "the little dark people" could he find friends who hated towns and tradesmen as he did.

Roger, too, spends much of his time lying on the mounds. But when I asked him what he thought about, he suddenly started, as though he had been talking in his sleep, and said, "You can't say there are no 'places of historic interest' when you remember the Roman potteries at Island's Thorn, and Crock Hill, and Sloden, and Ashley Rails. Heywood Sumner found at Ashley coins dating from Antoninus Pius to Constantine the Great, and some vessels which are in the British Museum. You must go and see them when you get back. Then there's Downton—over the border it's true, but not very far. The Saxons held an open-air court of justice there. I never go to the Moot without feeling as reverent as though I were in a cathedral or at Stonehenge. Saxon justice has done great things for the world, hasn't it? I suppose there

are solitary Englishmen out in Africa carrying on the traditions of the Downton Moot with a circle of tribesmen squatting before their tent. One ought to be out there doing some solid work. I suppose that one isn't because one's got too much of the other race about one: 'We are the music-makers, and we are the dreamers of dreams!' It's only a pretty way of owning that we aren't the workers, the pioneers, the road-makers. Your brother's Saxon; I'm — Iberian, I suppose. It must be good to feel that he has created a great business, made work for hundreds of people, brought something out of nothing. . . . But this hasn't anything to do with 'places of historic interest.'

"'Bramshaw Telegraph' will be one in a generation or two. It used to be a station for semaphore signals. There was a chain from Portsmouth to London. They could send Greenwich time to Portsmouth in forty-five seconds. It's queer to think that though the semaphore telegraph was out of date by 1847, when the last message

was sent, yet the last smuggler's cargo was not run till four years later.

"I suppose you might call Gibbet Wood an historic place. The last man to be hanged in chains was gibbeted there, a little above Brook."

Had the man stolen a sheep? I asked.

It was murder, said Roger. I couldn't leave it at that; we Britons have always demanded, both from our Shakespeare and our daily papers, as much murder as possible. Here is the full story.

An open-air dance was to be held in the Forest, and one young man had no money for a ticket. In the evening he asked for a loan from an old woman who kept a little shop near Bramshaw: one knows the kind —a cottage with three jars of sweets and a packet of tobacco in the small window, and a "Licensed to sell" over the door. Perhaps he was a youth better at dancing, throwing squoyles at squirrels, and dodging keepers by moonlight than at steady work. Perhaps the old lady knew she would never

get her money again, and her business was too poor to permit any losses. She refused; they argued, the withered old woman and the sturdy young labourer. Suddenly he lost his temper. By evil chance there was an axe in the shop. He seized it, swung it up, and felled the woman. Instantly his temper left him, and he knew nothing but terror. He thought to hide his crime by setting fire to the cottage. When it was fairly ablaze he went to the policeman's house, and said that as he was going home from work he had seen the cottage in flames. No one would suspect him after that, he thought. Then he went to the inn, and told the other men there what he had seen. There had been two sailor chaps hanging about that afternoon, he said; no doubt they had set the cottage afire, and he added, "I hope they'll put the saddle on the right horse." He drank, with unsteady hand, and went home. The others crowded to the scene of the fire, where they learnt that the old woman had been rescued, still breathing, and that she had lived long

enough to tell her murderer's name. He was hanged in chains before his mother's door. When the dreadful thing reached an unbearable stage of horror, it was not buried but moved to a place farther from the houses. One of his old neighbours used to pass it on his way to work each day, and used to tap the skull for the fun of making the tom-tits fly out of the eyeholes. At length, to win a drunken bet, it is said, a young man cut down the body and destroyed the gibbet one night. The hole where it stood is now (on the excellent authority of Mr Horace Hutchinson) a hole on the Bramshaw Golf Links.

While Roger and I have been tramping about the northern Forest, George has been playing golf daily, and giving Rosalind a few lessons. Roger in a greater, and I in a lesser degree, have been suffering from the same thing—the shock of discovering that a pleasant way of life, which seemed permanent as the earth, can suddenly give way beneath you like ice in a thaw. We have said nothing about it, but become friends.

CHAPTER XI

THE VALLEY OF THE AVON

Breamore—Fordingbridge—Ellingham—Moyles Court—Ringwood

THE sun woke me early. It was a blue windy day. Not a cloud was to be seen bigger than the wisps of wool sheep leave on brambles. The trees were all in a toss, so that their foliage looked green and silver by turns. In the garden I found a dishevelled Rosalind trying to hang out some washing. The clean linen was blown out of her hands as though Lawrence were abroad, and some fell on the brown earth, but she only laughed and said it reminded her of the poem :

> " O Keith of Ravelston,
> The sorrows of thy *line* ! "

At breakfast George said he felt it was

Diana Weston

FORESTERS

FORDINGBRIDGE

the day for a drive. Mrs Lister told us we ought to see the Valley of the Avon. Once that river was the western boundary, but now they run parallel, about two miles apart. The valley is charming and very lonely.

We all four set off for Lyndhurst to get a car. The woods were in a frivolous mood, like a class of naughty schoolgirls. They managed to keep still for a moment or two together, but presently the whispering would begin again, and soon they would be swept away by sallies of laughter. Rosalind's blue frock and her hair joined in the fun, do what she might to stop them. I remembered how Keats loved such days, and how when he felt one of the gusts approach he would run to climb a gate or bank, and wave his hat and cry aloud, "The wind! the wind!" I remembered Masefield's description of such a day at sea, when the ship leapt through the water, and all the sailors sang and shouted, drunk with the glory of the wind. Then I thought of how little Bevis

of *Wood Magic* made friends with the wind, who promised that as long as he visited the tempestuous hilltop he should be strong in body and soul.

It was a good walk, but the drive was as good. Over Stony Cross, Fritham, and down the big flanks of Deadman Hill we went, through a vivid world which seemed bigger than usual, so far could we see in the clear air. At Godshill we turned up to Wood Green on our way to Breamore. Between the two villages there is a mill, standing, it seems, on one or two islands, for the stream splits up and surrounds it. The bridge has to be two bridges before it can get clear across. The river is dotted with little rafts of white flowers, and the mill has gardens under its plain comely walls. It is one of the prettiest sights I can remember.

Now we were fairly in the valley. It is the quietest land in the world. We met no other car all the way to Ringwood, and saw hardly any people. Fields and lanes

were deserted alike, but it is a flowering country, and has no forlorn look. The river gives it life. It is not a big river, but it divides, and twists, and runs to and fro with a pretty capriciousness that makes up for lost dignity.

We left the Avon and Breamore village behind to reach the church. I could never have found it alone. On a hill above the village there are some park-like gates. Within are thatched cottages, obviously pertaining to grooms and gardeners, a great walled garden, and then the church, looking as though it, too, were a retainer of Breamore House. There is a curious split yew in the churchyard, and lying near it an old stone coffin. It was like the one Tess of the D'Urbervilles was laid in by her husband in Dorset. After Alec's murder the lovers fled by the New Forest to Stonehenge. This coffin is all that is left of the Priory which once stood here, founded by Baldwin de Redvers and abolished by Henry VIII, who gave the lands and sites to the Marquis of Exeter.

Breamore Church is a lion among Hampshire churches, though it is only a whelp in size. It is Saxon, possesses that rare thing a Saxon sculpture of the crucifixion, and over the south transept arch there is an Anglo-Saxon inscription. Surely in James I's reign a gentleman called Henry Spelman must have ridden a steaming horse up to this church, and gloated over that inscription, for he was a student of old records, had taught himself Anglo-Saxon, and endowed an Anglo-Saxon lecture at Cambridge. Probably the vicar then learnt for the first time that the mystic characters meant, "Here the covenant becomes manifest to thee." In the porch there is a contemporary of his, a bench marked 1617. The church is flint-faced and short of tower. Over the round arch of the doorway there is an iron-grilled window, and above it a sundial. A fresco fades in the porch. Within there is great simplicity—a rafter roof and the famous inscription.

Thence we went on to Burgate, where for

centuries an old stone cross rebuked hard landlords and drunken fathers, welcomed travellers from the dangerous Forest, and assured little children that ghosts and demons would not dare to approach the village. But in the last century, when people were so much enlightened, when tin chapels and blood-and-bandage school-houses and Swiss chalets sprang up all over England, then the superstitious cross was broken to mend the roads.

Fordingbridge came next. It is a pleasant little town, made by the river where men fish for pike and trout. Its glove-making business has dwindled and died, like every other business, not as old as the Conqueror's time, which has tried to exist in the Forest.

Once upon a time Fordingbridge was of great importance, for it commanded the high road to the Forest. For a month every year the lord of the manor was responsible for mounting a guard on the bridge to stop everyone whose tumbril or saddle-bag had a look of hidden venison. There used to be

a hospital in Fordingbridge, but in the reign of Henry VI it was dissolved and St Cross at Winchester received its revenues. There is no old building to see at Fordingbridge except the church. It is approached by a lime-tree avenue, and seems, inside, almost cathedral-like in size after Breamore. The roof of the north chancel is richly carved Perpendicular, and the windows are Early Decorated. But there is no sweetness in the atmosphere, no feeling that the Fordingbridgians have had Izaak Walton's spirit: cold, business-like people, you would imagine, who came here to criticise their neighbours' finery and think about the glove business through the sermon.

Just outside Fordingbridge there is a hill with a camp, called Sandy Balls, which commands a very famous view, but being spoilt with so many fine prospects, we spent our time in the garden of the Albany instead. This is one of those inns, so rare in England, where you are welcomed. A neat young lady offered us lunch in the

summer-house; a smart young man, with check breeches and a cap stuck all over with fishing-flies, helped to stow away the car. The hotel itself is almost in the river, but there is room on the bank for trees and a summer-house. To the right is a seven-arched stone bridge, to the left a bend in the river. There we had an excellent cold lunch, while the waters swirled by, carrying sheaves of white water-flowers—they had been cutting the weeds higher up the river—and trees nodded to us on the other side. Sparrows came and begged. A kitten and puppies were brought out by a charming little boy whose cap was stuck over with flies like his father's. It was so good a meal that when we came to Gorley, some two miles off, no one wanted to climb Gorley Hill on the chance of seeing the spire of Salisbury Cathedral, though that is the proper thing to do. We went on to Ibsley, which claims to be the prettiest of all the villages in the district. The cottages, the weir, the elms

compose a delightful picture. It has no history, except that in the Conqueror's day it was assessed at ten shillings and seven hundred eels. An even more delicious tribute was paid by the Priors of Hamble to the Bishops of Winchester in the form of twenty thousand oysters.

An avenue brought us to a cross-road. Turning down a lane to the right we came to Ellingham's little church. There was once a cell, or small religious house, here dependent on an abbey in Normandy, and ruled from across the sea by the Mother-House, but it was dissolved by Henry VI and its revenue given to Eton. Yews lead to its ponderous door. Inside, its Early Englishness has not been much marred. The carved rood-screen has a stand for an hour-glass, which is duly in its place. There is a picture of "The Last Judgment," looted from a church in the Bay of Cadiz by some gentleman of fortune, I suppose, who had drowsed out many a sermon here in his childhood, and made atonement by

this offering. Perhaps it has frightened generations of children into wakefulness since his day. The most interesting thing (humanly speaking) in the church is the Moyles Court pew, with its canopy and screen of carved wood.

Here in the seventeenth century a sad woman used to pray. She was Alice, daughter of Sir White Beconshaw, a cavalier of this parish, who had married a Puritan, made Lord Commissioner Lisle by Cromwell. She and her son were Royalists. She wept bitterly at the death of Charles I. After the Restoration her husband was obliged to fly the country, and was at last assassinated abroad. His widow thought to end her anxious life among these Hampshire lanes, caring for the poor. But in 1685 the Duke of Monmouth was persuaded to become "Captain General of the English Protestants in arms against tyranny and popery." He landed in the West. The country gentlemen, chiefly Royalists like Dame Alice, stood aloof, or else took arms

against him like old Peter Mews, the Bishop of Winchester, who had fought for Charles I, and now hurried to the battlefield in a coach; but the labourers flocked to his standard. After the defeat of Sedgemoor, two men called Hicks and Nelthorpe came to Moyles Court entreating a night's shelter. Dame Alice said afterwards that she did not know they had been concerned in the rising; she knew Hicks was a Nonconformist and thought he was being persecuted for field preaching. She asked no questions. As she had helped Royalists during the Protectorate, so she helped these men.

The household was wakened at dawn by the drumming of horses' hooves. Moyles Court was surrounded by soldiers. Dame Alice was ordered to say where her guests were hidden. She refused to betray them into the hands which gave Titus Oates seventeen hundred stripes, chained a girl of eighteen to a post where the sea would drown her, and burned down a widow's cottage after shooting her eldest child.

But at last the poor men were dragged out, one from a pile of sacks in the malthouse, another from the chimney. Dame Alice was taken to prison with them.

Judge Jeffreys came down to wreak vengeance on the West in the Bloody Assize. His inhuman pleasure at the sight of fear and suffering, his savage sentences, which set gibbets all along the high road and made the whole county of Somerset smell of death, presented him as an ogre to children born long after his generation, and in Devonshire the game of Tom Tiddler's ground is called Judge Jeffreys' ground.

Alice Lisle, then seventy years old, was brought before him on a charge of treason. As usual Jeffreys shouted down the defence, and browbeat the witnesses till they were silent. The jury, nearly all Hampshire gentlemen of good estate, could not find her guilty. Jeffreys ordered them to reverse their verdict. They obeyed. He sentenced her to be burned that afternoon.

The clergy of Winchester besought a few

days' respite. As the Church had much influence with the Tory party, Jeffreys thought it politic to grant Dame Alice five days in which to repent and set her affairs in order. Those five days were spent in intercession with the King. His own brother-in-law, and the commander-in-chief who had just defeated Monmouth, were among those of great influence and rank who implored for a reprieve. The King in his clemency granted that the old woman should die on the block instead of at the stake. Another woman, Elizabeth Gaunt, was actually burned for the same offence in London.

Alice Lisle was beheaded in Winchester market-place, showing "a serene courage." She could weep over Charles I's death and tremble for the poor Puritans dragged out of hiding in her house, but there was no room for self-pity in that magnificent spirit. Her tomb in Ellingham churchyard only says: "Alicia Lisle Dyed the second of September 1685." In William and Mary's

reign her relations got the attainder reversed.

Returning to the cross-roads, we took the left-hand lane, or bridle-track, which leads to Moyles Court. The way goes between bracken, brier, oak, and beech till the stables and gardener's cottage appear. You must circle round to face the house itself, where it stands contemplating a slope of grass land fringed with woods. On one side its gardens melt into the wood. Like Henry James' house at Rye, the building has the dignified simplicity of a Charles II dwelling, but it is built on the site of a mediæval manor-house. Its rosy brown bricks looked as natural as the green leaves of the tremendous oak standing at the ford to the right of the house. That way would have taken us straightway on to the moor and then home by Picket Post, but there was Ringwood to see, so we returned to the Valley of the Avon.

On the road Mrs Lister told us that Sir Edward Goschen had Moyles Court for

some time. In years to come sightseers will be told that he was British Ambassador to Berlin at the outbreak of the Great War, and said yes when Bethmann-Hollweg asked if England would go to war for "a scrap of paper."

Ringwood is now an unremarkable town, no longer famous for its breweries and its fairs. Its church is a modern copy of the old one, but it contains a fine fifteenth-century brass to John Prophete. At Ringwood Grammar School Stillingfleet was educated. He was the courageous defender of the Church of England who answered treatises which were almost openly ascribed to Charles II, and refused to be a member of James' ecclesiastical commission. In spite of this he was first chaplain to Charles II, and then Bishop of Worcester. He was very handsome, and his style reflects his person: Lord Clarendon praises "the strength and vigour of his ratiocination . . . and civility of his language."

Ringwood is close linked with the Duke

of Monmouth. Flying with two others after Sedgemoor, he hoped to gain the New Forest, where it was easy to hide until he could get some boat to take him abroad. Lymington had raised him a troop, and would shelter him. But soldiers were drawn out all along the coast, and cut them off from the Forest. A woman saw strangers skulking in Cranborne Chase. It was surrounded, and searched for two days and a night. One by one the fugitives were caught, Monmouth last of all. His once handsome face was haggard and covered with a three days' beard. The courage which had won him fame in the French army at Maestricht now quite deserted him. From Ringwood, where he was kept prisoner, he wrote craven letters begging for his life, repenting of his treason, blaming his counsellors for his faults, imploring James to give him one interview so that he might impart a great secret. After two days he was taken from Ringwood on the three days' journey to London. There he

crawled to the King's feet on his knees, sobbing and praying for his life, in vain. A few mornings later he was led to the block and hacked to death by Jack Ketch, whose name has become a synonym for his dreadful trade. Monmouth was buried in the Tower, near Margaret Pole, the fearless Countess whose empty tomb we saw at Christchurch.

Monmouth's high-born paramour died of grief a few months after him. It is said that she had a chief share in persuading him to lead the rebellion.

The best part of the valley now lay behind us, but it was worth while to go on and see Tyrrell's Ford, where the Norman shod his horse on the way to Poole Harbour, and to look at pretty Sopley with its Early English church set, as St Michael's churches should be, on a mount. Then by St Catherine's Hill with its Roman camp we came to Christchurch, where we had a most commendable home-made tea, and another look at the Norman turret before returning to the woodland.

Roger tells me that the Church registers of the valley have great interest. There are certificates that people have been buried in woollen shrouds, in compliance with an Act framed to protect the wool trade ; there is a special licence (at 13s. a year) for meat-eating on Friday and Saturday, which had been forbidden by Elizabeth when the English fisheries were languishing ; also, to the glory of our sex, there is a record of a burial by women because no man would dig a grave for a Papist.

There is considerably more human interest in history than in many modern novels.

CHAPTER XII

PURELY IRRELEVANT

So it is over.

George invented a friend staying at the Balmer Lawn Hotel, and drove me out to dine there. When Mrs Lister was out of earshot he explained that he had a craving for sophisticated food. But I felt all the time that this dinner was going to be the occasion of an announcement. We had a table by one of the French windows with a sunset view of ponies cropping the greensward, and youths playing cricket. We had a most excellent meal, according to George. But all the time I was thinking of my favourite brother's disaster.

After dinner we walked in the gardens behind the hotel, which were quite deserted. George was obviously nervous, and took a

little time to get going. He began to say that he felt better for his meal. He had got very tired of wholesome food. He wasn't good enough for the Simple Life. He liked room for his clothes, and high ceilings, and big arm-chairs, and long corridors with baize doors between him and the kitchen. In fact he should have gone back to town before if it weren't for the personal factor.

"I thought you were enjoying it so much," I said.

"It was all right for a few days as a change," said George, "but after that I got very homesick. I should have cleared out if it hadn't been for the personal factor."

"Ah, yes," I said, "the personal factor."

"I knew they wanted the money," George went on. "I suppose you've noticed how much better Mrs Lister looks now than she did when we came? I believe it is from having enough to eat."

"I hadn't noticed," I said. "Oh, are you sure?"

"Yes; she was greyish, and now she's

pinkish," my brother declared. "I've been thinking and thinking how I could get away and leave them all right. I was jolly nearly reduced to bribing someone to be a perpetual lodger, or marrying one of them. . . ."

"*One of them?*" I exclaimed.

"Not both," said George. "That would be unnecessary, wouldn't it?"

I said with an unnatural laugh that it would be a work of supererogation.

"At last I hit on something," said George. "You know Roger Mast?"

"I do."

"Well, him," said George.

"I don't see at all."

"He's frightfully gone on Rosalind. But he hasn't any money to marry on. Now if I make Mast, and he marries Rosalind, the Listers are provided for."

"But will Rosalind marry him?"

"She thinks him the greatest genius and the most virtuous character in the whole of history," said George. "No, the difficulty

isn't there. The problem is how to make Mast. Obviously he has no head for business."

"None at all."

"So," said George, in jerks and pauses, "I thought a sort of estate agent's job might do. And as it happened, there is a small property for sale here—two small farms, a bit of woodland, and a house. It would be rather jolly to have our own butter and things sent up to town, wouldn't it? We could run down sometimes and have some friends to stay. There's lots of rough shooting in the Forest."

"My dear George, I think it's *splendid*!" I exclaimed, and my eyes must have shone with relief.

George's did too. "That's all right," he said. "I was afraid you'd be down on me for extravagance. As a matter of fact it will mean cutting down in other ways. But if you don't mind . . ."

"Oh, I don't mind anything," I said, taking George's arm and looking at him as

though he were newly restored to me from the jaws of death.

George said "That's all right!" again with great satisfaction. "Of course Roger will be no use, but Rosalind will run the place. She seems to know a lot about farms and labourers. She impresses me as a capable sort of girl." As that only!

So it is over. But we shall come back, with guests. We shall go to all the old places, and visit fresh ones, such as Salisbury and Romsey. I shall lay down the law to newcomers, like Roger. And I shall see that every one of them has sturdy shoes, a bottle of anti-fly lotion, and the ordnance map. With those things and curiosity no one could help enjoying a visit to the New Forest.

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MAP OF THE NEW FOREST